SPINOZA AND GERMAN IDEALISM

EDITED BY
ECKART FÖRSTER
AND
YITZHAK Y. MELAMED

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There can be little doubt that without Spinoza, German Idealism would have been just as impossible as it would have been without Kant. Yet the precise nature of Spinoza's influence on the German Idealists has hardly been studied in detail. This volume of essays by leading scholars sheds light on how the appropriation of Spinoza by Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel grew out of the reception of his philosophy by, among others, Lessing, Mendelssohn, Jacobi, Herder, Goethe, Schleiermacher, Maimon, and, of course, Kant. The volume thus not only illuminates the history of Spinoza's thought, but also initiates a genuine philosophical dialogue between the ideas of Spinoza and those of the German Idealists. The issues at stake – the value of humanity; the possibility and importance of self-negation; the nature and value of reason and imagination; human freedom; teleology; intuitive knowledge; the nature of God – remain of the highest philosophical importance today.

ECKART FÖRSTER is Professor of Philosophy, German, and the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University, and Honorary Professor of Philosophy at the Humboldt-Universität, Berlin. His most recent publications include *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy* (2012) and *Kant's Final Synthesis* (2000).

YITZHAK Y. MELAMED is Associate Professor of Philosophy and the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University. He is the author of *Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance and Thought* (forthcoming), and co-editor, with Michael A. Rosenthal, of *Spinoza's Theological-Political Treatise: A Critical Guide* (Cambridge, 2010).

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To our children,
Kira Förster, and Yonathan-Moshe, Alma-Eva, and
Daniel-Jacob Melamed

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Contributors

KARL AMERIKS is McMahon-Hank Professor of Philosophy at the University of Notre Dame.

FREDERICK BEISER is Professor of Philosophy at Syracuse University.

OMRI BOEHM is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at the New School for Social Research, New York.

MICHAEL DELLA ROCCA is Andrew Downey Orrick Professor of Philosophy at Yale University.

ECKART FÖRSTER is Professor of Philosophy, German, and the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, and Honorary Professor of Philosophy at the Humboldt-Universität, Berlin.

MICHAEL N. FORSTER is Glen A. Lloyd Distinguished Service Professor of Philosophy and the College at the University of Chicago.

DON GARRETT is Professor of Philosophy and Chair of Department at New York University.

JOHANNES HAAG is Professor of Philosophy at the University of Potsdam.

GUNNAR HINDRICHS is Visiting Associate Professor of Philosophy at the University of Pennsylvania.

YITZHAK Y. MELAMED is Associate Professor of Philosophy and the Humanities at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.

DEAN MOYAR is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore.

DALIA NASSAR is Assistant Professor of Philosophy at Villanova University.

MICHAEL VATER is Associate Professor of Philosophy at Marquette University, Milwaukee.

ALLEN WOOD is Ruth Norman Halls Professor of Philosophy at Indiana University, Bloomington.

Abbreviations

(for complete references see the bibliography)

AA	Kant, *Gesammelte Schriften* (Akademie Ausgabe)
A/B	Kant, *Critik der reinen Vernunft*, 1st edn. (A); and 2nd edn. (B), respectively
AT	Descartes, *Oeuvres de Descartes* (ed. Adam and Tannery)
C	*The Collected Works of Spinoza* (ed. and trans. Curley)
CM	Spinoza, *Metaphysical Thoughts* (in C)
CSM	*The Philosophical Writings of Descartes* (trans. Cottingham, Stoothoff, and Murdoch)
DPP	Spinoza, *Descartes' Principles of Philosophy* (in C)
E	Spinoza, *Ethics*: a(-xiom), app(-endix), c(-orollary), d(-efinition), dem(-onstration), expl(-anation), lem(-ma), p(-roposition), pref(-ace), s(-cholium). [Thus, e.g., E1d3 is the third definition of Part 1 and E1p16dem is the demonstration of proposition 16 of Part 1]
EL	Hegel, *The Encylopaedia Logic*
Ep.	Spinoza, *The Letters*
FW	Fichte, *Werke*, ed. I. H. Fichte
G	Spinoza, *Opera* (ed. C. Gebhardt). [E.g., G IV/25/12 is a reference to Vol. IV of Gebhardt's critical edition, p. 25, line 12]
GA	Fichte, *Gesamtausgabe der Bayrischen Akademie der Wissenschaften*
GW	Hegel, *Gesammelte Werke*

HA	Goethe, *Werke* (Hamburger Ausgabe)
HG	Herder, *Werke* (ed. U. Gaier *et al.*)
HKA	Schelling, *Werke* (Historisch-kritische Ausgabe)
HS	Herder, *Sämtliche Werke* (ed. Suphan *et al.*)
IW	Fichte, *Introductions to the* Wissenschaftslehre *and Other Writings (1787–1800)*
KGA	Schleiermacher, *Kritische Gesamtausgabe*
KpV	Kant, *Critique of Practical Reason*
KrV	Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*
KV	Spinoza, *Short Treatise on God, Man, and his Well-Being* (in C)
LHP	Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*
LPR	Hegel, *Lectures on the Philosophy of Religion*
NR	Fichte, *Foundations of Natural Right*
SE	Fichte, *System of Ethics*
SL	*Hegel's Science of Logic* (trans. Miller)
SW	Schelling, *Sämtliche Werke*
TIE	Spinoza, *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* (in C)
TTP	Spinoza, *Theologico-Political Treatise*
W	Hegel, *Werke in 20 Bänden*

Introduction

German Idealism is sometimes characterized as a synthesis of the fundamental ideas of Spinoza and Kant. Though such a statement is too simplistic, there can be little doubt that without Spinoza, German Idealism would have been just as impossible as it would have been without Kant. Indeed, each of the German Idealists emphasized the importance of Spinoza for his own endeavor – in terms of both agreement and disagreement – just as each of them did with Kant.

Yet the precise nature of Spinoza's influence on the German Idealists has hardly been studied in detail. While a few older monographs address individual aspects of this relationship, there is in English no comprehensive examination of the profound impact that Spinoza's philosophy had on the German Idealists. Most importantly, there is no work that represents the current state of scholarship in these fields and reflects the enormous advances achieved by the research of the last few decades.

The present volume fills this lacuna. Moreover, the volume also sheds light on how the appropriation of Spinoza through Fichte, Schelling, and Hegel was prepared by the reception of Spinoza's philosophy by, among others, Lessing, Mendelssohn, Jacobi, Herder, Goethe, Schleiermacher, Maimon, and, of course, Kant. The main aim is not merely to trace a part of the reception history of Spinoza's philosophy, however, but to initiate a genuine philosophical dialogue between the ideas of Spinoza and the German Idealists. We believe that the issues at stake – the value of humanity, the possibility and importance of self-negation, the nature and value of reason and imagination, the possibility of a philosophical system, human freedom, teleology, intuitive knowledge, the nature of God – are of the highest philosophical importance even today.

We gratefully acknowledge financial support for the initial conference and the present book from the Metanexus Institute, the John Templeton Foundation, the Singleton Center, the Jewish Studies Program, and the Krieger School of Arts and Sciences at Johns Hopkins University.

This collection is especially timely in light of the trends in recent scholarship. Over the last few decades, there has been within the anglophone philosophical community a remarkable revival of interest in German Idealism. In its first phase, this revival gave particular emphasis to the relationship between German Idealism and Kantianism, playing down the metaphysical or speculative side while stressing the social and pragmatic dimensions of the idealist systems. More recently, however, this interest has also taken a more metaphysical direction, coupled with a concern with how the German Idealists conceived of the proper task and nature of philosophy itself.

This new direction of inquiry has been paralleled, interestingly, by the re-emergence of metaphysics as a central area in analytic philosophy. As is well known, the analytic tradition began with a pronounced rejection of the Hegelian and Spinozist philosophies of the British Idealists, and it seems hardly a coincidence that the re-emergence of metaphysics as a central philosophical discipline toward the end of the twentieth century occurred simultaneously with an increase of interest in and engagement with Spinoza's philosophy, including a re-evaluation of his central role in the development of modern philosophy. In point of fact, the fate of Spinozism has always been – and presumably will continue to be – strongly tied to the fate of metaphysics, for Spinoza is the metaphysician par excellence of western philosophy.

The present volume grew out of a conference on Spinoza and German Idealism, held at Johns Hopkins University in May, 2010. The conference's goal was to bring together scholars working in these areas and to make available for general discussion some of the results of these promising recent developments.

In the opening chapter, "Rationalism, idealism, monism, and beyond," Michael Della Rocca examines Spinoza's philosophical position from a number of different angles. He articulates, first, the particular kind of rationalism Spinoza endorses. He then explains what kind of idealism Spinoza's rationalism commits him to – namely a version of idealism compatible with Spinoza's explanatory separation between thought and extension. He then turns to the nature of the monism embedded in Spinoza's rationalism – namely a monism in which the multiplicity of finite things enjoys only some degree of existence. In the end, however, Della Rocca argues, this line of thought pushes us beyond both monism and Spinoza to a view according to which, perhaps, no thing exists fully.

The presence of Spinoza in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason* is examined by Omri Boehm in his chapter, "Kant's idea of the unconditioned and

Spinoza's: the fourth Antinomy and the Ideal of Pure Reason." Taking his cue from Kant's claim, in the *Critique of Practical Reason*, that if transcendental idealism is denied, "nothing remains but Spinozism," Boehm argues that this claim in fact reaffirms an argument Kant had already advanced in the fourth Antinomy. In light of this Antinomy's analysis of the unconditioned being's relation to the world, it becomes clear that already in the first *Critique* Kant had viewed Spinozism as a necessary outcome of transcendental realism.

The relation between Kant and Spinoza is examined further in a chapter by Karl Ameriks, entitled "The question is whether a purely apparent person is possible." As Ameriks argues, given both Kant's transcendental idealism and his critique of rational psychology, it is not easy to understand how – or even whether – Kant can vindicate any substantial claims about our personal identity. Spinoza's philosophy presents a significant challenge to such claims, and Schleiermacher's notes on Spinoza and Jacobi provide one of the very few early discussions as to how Kant's philosophy might relate to that of Spinoza. By considering a wide range of Kantian texts, Ameriks discusses how Kant might have reacted to Schleiermacher on this topic.

In 1785, four years after the publication of Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, F. H. Jacobi published his conversations with Lessing, *On the Doctrine of Spinoza, in Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn*. With this Jacobi ignited the notorious *Spinozastreit*, or Pantheism Controversy, which shook the German intellectual world at the end of the eighteenth century. Jacobi himself was negatively disposed toward Spinozism (as was the addressee of his letters, Mendelssohn) and strove to offer an alternative to it. Thus, Michael Forster argues in "Herder and Spinoza," he can hardly be credited with initiating the "massive wave of positive appropriations of Spinoza" that followed in the wake of his publication. Instead we must turn to those who, at the time, were enthusiasts for Spinoza's philosophy: Lessing, Herder, Goethe, and among these Herder most of all. In 1787 Herder published a work, entitled *God: Some Conversations*, which defended a revised form of Spinoza's metaphysical monism and determinism. As Forster shows, however, Spinoza's positive influence on Herder began as early as 1768/1769, and Herder gradually came to incorporate increasingly fundamental aspects of Spinoza's thought from both the *Tractatus Theologico–Politicus* and the *Ethics*.

At the bottom of Goethe's disagreement with Jacobi's interpretation of Spinoza lies his conviction that, in identifying the "spirit of Spinozism" with the principle *a nihilo nihil fit*, Jacobi commits Spinoza to a causal

explanatory principle, and thus to a second kind of knowledge. For Goethe, however, Spinoza's "most subtle ideas" concern the *third* kind of knowledge. In "Goethe's Spinozism," Eckart Förster traces the steps that Goethe undertook to develop Spinoza's programmatic reflections on the third kind of knowledge into a methodology of *scientia intuitiva* applicable to natural objects.

Fichte, in his early *Wissenschaftslehre*, criticizes Spinoza's account of consciousness for both finite and infinite beings. In "Fichte on the consciousness of Spinoza's God," Johannes Haag reconstructs this criticism against the background of Fichte's own conception of consciousness, in particular the specific understanding of the *Thathandlung*, i.e., the original positing of the I as an I, and the allied concept of an intellectual intuition. As Haag argues, while Spinoza's subjects of empirical consciousness are incapable of an intellectual intuition, his God is similarly incapable of proceeding from the original *Thathandlung* to the second, equally essential step of self-positing, namely that of counter-positing. As a consequence, God too is incapable of an intellectual intuition, since the latter presupposes the second step. As a result, *neither* empirical subjects *nor* God can fulfill the conditions Fichte places on an explanation of consciousness.

In "Fichte on freedom: the Spinozistic background," Allen Wood explores Fichte's conception of freedom and his arguments for it, emphasizing the powerful influence Spinoza always had on Fichte. When the latter was "converted" to Kantianism in 1790, he had yet to publish anything, but he was already twenty-eight years old, and a fully formed philosopher; he even thought of himself as having a philosophical "system." All the evidence suggests that this system was a form of Spinozism. Throughout Fichte's life, Spinoza continued to be at least as powerful an influence as Kant ever was. This is true even with respect to that issue wherein Fichte saw himself aligned with Kant and in opposition to Spinoza: namely, freedom of the will. We have here a paradigm example of what we may call 'negative influence' in philosophy: the influencing philosopher determines the way the influenced philosopher poses and resolves the issue about which they disagree.

In "Spinoza in Schelling's early conception of intellectual intuition," Dalia Nassar examines Schelling's earliest philosophical writings and argues that, until 1796, Schelling was much more influenced by Spinoza than by Fichte. In particular, she contends, Schelling's conception of intellectual intuition, which he first developed in *Vom Ich als Prinzip der*

Philosophie (1795), mirrors Spinoza's third kind of knowledge. In spite of his clear affinity with Spinoza, however, Schelling maintains a critical attitude toward him. Nassar considers the reasons for Schelling's distance from Spinoza and concludes that, for Schelling, Spinoza's immanentism was not immanent enough.

Michael Vater ("Schelling's philosophy of identity and Spinoza's *Ethica more geometrico*") closely examines the extent of Spinoza's presence in Schelling's first document of his Philosophy of Identity, the 1801 essay *Presentation of My System of Philosophy*. Of those who sought to incorporate into their own systems as much as they dared from the *Ethica more geometrico*, no one, Vater argues, was more forthright than Schelling. His *Presentation* utilized three key concepts of Spinoza: the definition of *substance* as self-existing and *attribute* as what is conceivable only through itself; the infinite nature of the apparently finite; and *conatus*, or the endeavor of a finite entity to preserve its being.

In the German Idealists' appropriation of Spinoza, few thoughts were considered as important and central as the principle *omnis determinatio est negatio*, which Hegel and his contemporaries attributed directly to Spinoza. In his chapter, "'Omnis determinatio est negatio': determination, negation, and self-negation in Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel," Yitzhak Melamed argues that this famous dictum was in fact interpreted in three quite different senses, which might be called the acosmic, the dialectical, and the Kantian sense, respectively. He examines each interpretation in detail and compares it with Spinoza's own position. Ultimately, he concludes that, in spite of Kant's expressed hostility toward Spinoza's philosophy, his latent use of the formula turns out to be much closer to Spinoza's meaning than Hegel's enthusiastic adoption of the principle.

Dean Moyar examines Hegel's criticisms of Spinoza in order to address the ongoing dispute about Hegel and metaphysics. This debate is consistently framed in terms that refer to Spinoza as a philosopher with a robust metaphysical view. The assumption is that if Hegel is shown to be closer to Spinoza than to Kant, his view should be considered metaphysical. By examining Hegel's criticism of Spinoza, focusing especially on the relation between thought and substance, Moyar clarifies some of the central issues in the debate over Hegel's metaphysics and situates his position on metaphysics in relation to both Spinoza and Kant.

Gunnar Hindrichs interprets Spinoza's and Hegel's philosophies as two models of metaphysical inferentialism. Both combine the inferential texture of thinking with revisionary metaphysics. They differ, Hindrichs

argues, in the fact that Spinoza's model rests on definitions of basic concepts and amounts to an intuitive knowledge of the whole, whereas Hegel's model dismisses these moments as violating the inferential structure of thought. For Hegel, the only fixation that can be justified under inferentialist premises is the closed system at the end of reasoning. Thus, Hegel transforms Spinoza's *prima philosophia* into a *philosophia ultima*.

Frederick Beiser, in "Trendelenburg and Spinoza," maintains it is necessary to consider the nineteenth-century philosopher Trendelenburg if one wants to do full justice to the theme of Spinoza and German Idealism. For the same criteria by which we describe Schelling and Hegel as idealists apply perfectly well to Trendelenburg. Tracing the latter's complex and developing appropriation of Spinoza, Beiser shows that Trendelenburg regarded Spinoza's system as new and original in that he provided the only alternative to materialism and teleology as the principles for the explanation of reality – a position for which Spinoza himself, however, provided insufficient justification.

What would Spinoza have made of the idealists' appropriations and criticisms of his thought, as presented by the authors in this volume? This collection opens with an examination of Spinoza's philosophical position and concludes with Don Garrett's "Reply on Spinoza's behalf."

The editors would like to express their heartfelt thanks to the authors for their thoughtful contributions to this volume, and to John Brandau for preparing the indices.

CHAPTER 1

Rationalism, idealism, monism, and beyond

Michael Della Rocca

This chapter is appearing in a volume on Spinoza and German Idealism. Unfortunately, as you may know, I don't view myself as equipped to speak in any substantial fashion on German Idealism. My only option, then, seems to be to focus – arbitrarily and unfairly from the perspective of the volume's theme – on Spinoza. But, of course, given the Principle of Sufficient Reason (the PSR), it's better to discuss nothing than to discuss one particular thing arbitrarily. And so that is what I propose to do: I will talk about nothing. Indeed, I will ultimately argue – guided here as always by the PSR – that nothing exists or at least that nothing exists fully. To reach this conclusion, I will chart some of the connections between rationalism – construed as a commitment to the PSR – and idealism and monism. Throughout, in addition to addressing these heady philosophical topics, I will also attend to the ways in which this rationalist voyage should color our understanding of Spinoza and of Hegel's engagement with Spinoza.

WHAT KIND OF RATIONALISM?

The term "rationalism" can mean a lot of different things, and I don't want to fight about the term. So let me just present my preferred characterization of rationalism, one that I will use throughout the chapter and that also, I believe, illuminates Spinoza's philosophical system. Thus, I characterize rationalism as the commitment to the PSR, to the view that for each thing that exists there is an explanation of its existence (and, for each thing that does not exist, there is an explanation of its non-existence).

I would like to thank the audiences at Johns Hopkins, Notre Dame, and Munich who generously helped this chapter attain greater – though no doubt still very imperfect – degrees of existence and intelligibility. Discussions and written comments from Omri Boehm, Anthony Bruno, Yitzhak Melamed, Sam Newlands, Mike Stange, Peter van Inwagen, and others were also very much appreciated.

Or, in other words, each thing is intelligible. Or, there is a *reason* for the existence of each thing that exists (and for the non-existence of each thing that does not exist). It is this version of rationalism that I find (and others find) in Spinoza, who embraces a particularly strong form of the PSR, for example, in E1p11d2: "For each thing, there must be assigned a cause or reason both for its existence and for its nonexistence."[1] Also E1a2 is relevant here: "What cannot be conceived through another must be conceived through itself." Spinoza here presupposes that each thing is conceived (either through itself or another), i.e., each thing can in some way be understood or made intelligible.[2]

What is required for the explanation of thing? I believe – though I will not argue for this view here – that to explain a thing is to explain the thing *as such-and-such*, to explain it in terms of some of its features. To explain a thing, one must, as it were, get in between the thing and its properties and come to see the thing in terms of those properties, which may, in the end, include relational properties or relations to other things. On this view of explanation, one does not and cannot explain a thing *brutely*, one must explain it *as* such-and-such. To explain a thing brutely, i.e. to explain *x* simply as *x*, is really no explanation at all, and thus such an "explanation" would run counter to the spirit of rationalism and the PSR.[3]

That explanation involves revealing some kind of relation between a thing and its properties, and also, in some cases, between a thing and other things, is evident if we look at some of the terms often used to express the rationalist commitment to explanation. To explain a thing can be seen as rendering it intelligible. But what is it to render a thing intelligible? Literally, it is "reading between" – *inter legere*. This fits in with the idea just articulated according to which in explaining a thing one is getting between a thing and its properties in order to enable the property to shed light on the thing. Similarly, when we explain a thing, we provide reasons for it, but what is a reason other than (if we return to the Latin again) a *ratio*, a ratio between one thing and, perhaps, another. Again, we see the inherently relational nature of explanation. Similarly,

[1] All references to passages in Spinoza are to the *Ethics* (E).

[2] See M. Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 4–5.

[3] Similarly, I believe that the PSR dictates that there is no brute or direct reference to objects. But that is a topic for another occasion. For more on explaining as explaining-as in Spinoza, see M. Della Rocca, "Explaining Explanation and the Multiplicity of Attributes," in M. Hampe and R. Schnepf (eds.), *Baruch de Spinoza: Ethik in geometrischer Ordnung dargestellt* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 2006), pp. 17–35.

explanation is often seen as explication. But what is explication? Literally it is to fold a thing out (*explicare*), to reveal the relations within a thing. To explain, then, is to place a thing in some kind of network of relations and thus relationality is present in the very nature of explaining as explaining-as. I'll return to the inherent relationality of explanation near the end of the chapter.

If rationalism is tied so directly to the PSR, then why should we take rationalism seriously? After all, hasn't the PSR been thoroughly discredited? Maybe so, but I should note that I have a defense of a full-blooded version of the PSR that I am ready to whip out at a moment's notice.[4] However, instead of arguing more or less directly for the PSR, I want to focus on some of the implications of the PSR. This demonstration of some of what follows from the PSR will help to bring out the power of rationalism and will help us to characterize the significance of Spinoza's system and of Hegel's response to it.

Perhaps the most important implication of the PSR can be summed up in my slogan: to be is to be intelligible. That is, for a thing to exist is just for it to be intelligible that it exists.

To demonstrate this implication of the PSR, let me begin as I have done elsewhere,[5] by showing that the PSR entails the biconditional: *x* exists if and only if it is intelligible that *x* exists. Let's focus first on the left-to-right half of this biconditional, i.e., on "if *x* exists, then it is intelligible that *x* exists." This is really just a statement of the PSR itself, which insists on the intelligibility of each thing that exists.

The right-to-left half of the biconditional is a little less straightforward: if it is intelligible that *x* exists, then *x* exists. To see why, given the PSR, this conditional is true, consider what would be the case if the conditional is false, i.e., what would be the case if it is intelligible that *x* exists, and yet *x* does not exist. If this is the case, then it must also be the case that it is intelligible that *x* does not exist. If it is intelligible that *x* does exist and *not* intelligible that *x* does not exist, then *x* must exist. So to preserve the assumption that our conditional is false and that *x*'s existence is intelligible and yet *x* does not exist, we must assume that *x*'s non-existence is also intelligible. But now if *x*'s existence and *x*'s non-existence are each intelligible, then which of these incompatible states of affairs obtains? Let's say that *x* exists, but given that *x*'s non-existence is equally

[4] See M. Della Rocca, "PSR," *Philosophers' Imprint* 10 (2010), http://quod.lib.umich.edu/p/phimp/3521354.0010.007?rgn=main;view=fulltext.

[5] E.g., in M. Della Rocca, "A Rationalist Manifesto: Spinoza and the Principle of Sufficient Reason," *Philosophical Topics* 31 (2003), 75–93 (pp. 85–86).

intelligible, it would seem that the fact that *x* exists would be a brute fact. Similarly, *x*'s non-existence would – given the equal intelligibility of *x*'s existence – be a brute fact, a violation of the PSR. (Recall that, as specified in the initial formulation of the PSR, both existence and non-existence must be explained.) Thus, given the PSR, it cannot be the case that both *x*'s existence and the non-existence of *x* are intelligible. It follows that if *x*'s existence is the intelligible state of affairs, then *x*'s non-existence must be not intelligible and so *x* must exist after all. So, given the PSR, we have the result that if it is intelligible that *x* exists, then *x* exists and, as we saw, if *x* exists then it is intelligible that *x* exists. We have here the coextensiveness of existence and intelligibility.

Given this coextensiveness, can we take the next step and conclude that existence and intelligibility are identical? Yes, I think that the PSR would cheer us on as we make this last step. If existence and intelligibility were not identical despite being coextensive, then what is it in virtue of which they would be non-identical? There must be something in virtue of which existence and intelligibility are not identical, if indeed they are not identical. But if existence and intelligibility are coextensive, nothing can ground their non-identity, as far as I can see. So, given the PSR – which ties existence to intelligibility – there would be a brute fact if existence itself were anything over and above intelligibility. Given the PSR, existence is explained in terms of – and is identical to – intelligibility itself. But then what explains the identity? If non-identity must be explained, as I have been claiming, then it must equally be the case that identity must be explained. So, in this case, if existence and intelligibility are identical, what explains this identity? The answer is ready-to-hand: given the lack of any explanation for their non-identity, the coextensiveness of existence and intelligibility is sufficient to explain their identity. At work here is an instance of the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles: indiscernibility – in this case the coextensiveness of existence and intelligibility – explains identity. As I have argued elsewhere, there is evidence that Spinoza accepts the identification of existence and intelligibility in his claim that God's essence is identical to God's existence (E1p20),[6] and there is evidence that Spinoza accepts the Principle of the Identity of Indiscernibles.[7]

[6] E.g., in *ibid*., pp. 82–84.

[7] See the way in which E1p4 is employed in E1p5, and see my discussion in Della Rocca, "Explaining Explanation."

Perhaps I should go even further and claim not just that existence is identical to intelligibility or explicability, but also that existence is identical to being understood or explained or intellig-ed. Spinoza himself often speaks in terms of being conceived rather than in terms of being conceivable. For example, substance is defined as that which is conceived through itself (E1d3). And similarly modes are said to be conceived through another (E1d5). The collapse of explicability and being explicated, being intelligible and being intellig-ed, etc., is exactly what one would expect once one sees that the PSR dictates – as many have argued – a general collapse of possibility and actuality.[8]

Putting my slogan this way – namely, as "existence is being explained or understood or intellig-ed" – makes the threat of idealism that rationalism may face very acute, for if existence is being understood, then it might seem as if the existence of each thing is somehow a mental entity. But this move to idealism would be too quick. It is important to distinguish between the understanding of a thing and its being understood. What is understood or explained is the thing that exists. The thing is *not* thereby the understanding or the explaining. Understanding and explaining might be seen as mental items or mental goings-on, but such a mental item is – at this point at least – to be distinguished from the thing itself, the thing that the mental goings-on are goings-on about. So the view that existence is intelligibility or being understood does not so quickly lead to the view that things in general are mental entities.

WHAT KIND OF IDEALISM?

Still, on Spinoza's view, there seems to be an essential connection between each thing and (actual or possible) thought about it. Such a connection might seem to lead to a form of idealism. But what form? As with the term "rationalism," I don't want to fight about the term "idealism," particularly because this term is one that Spinoza does not use. But let's see whether the view that each thing is just its being understood or understandable (even if it is not the understanding or the potential understanding of it) is a version of idealism, and if it is let's also see which version of idealism it is. Thus consider some candidate versions of idealism in order to see whether the view that "to be is to be intelligible" falls under any of these characterizations.

[8] See J. Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1984), p. 115.

First, take the view that there are none but thinking things: all that exists are minds and the ideas or mental states that minds have. Does Spinoza hold that all things are mental or thinking in this sense? He does hold that the mind and the body are the same (in some sense of "same") and that the thinking substance and the extended substance are the same.[9]

However, I have two reservations about lumping Spinoza in with idealism on this ground. First, although, for Spinoza, each thing is identical with something thinking, each thing is also identical with something extended. Thus, if it's true that there are none but thinking things, for Spinoza, then it is equally true, for him, that there are none but extended things. The second and more important reservation, though, emerges if we focus again on the slogan "to be is to be intelligible." Given this equivalence, it follows that to be thinking or mental is to be *conceived* or *explained* through the attribute of thought (E2p6, etc.). But, for Spinoza, bodies – considered as such, i.e., considered as extended things – are not and cannot be conceived through thought; rather they are conceived through extension alone. Thus, for Spinoza, the statement "the extended substance is thinking" is, strictly, false, and it is so precisely because to be is to be explained, and thus to be thinking is to be explained through thought. But given the complete conceptual independence of the attributes (of which more later and to which Spinoza gives expression in E1p10 and E2p6), nothing extended can be explained through thought and so nothing extended is thinking. This is part of what is, in effect, the vast edifice of referential opacity in Spinoza.[10] So it's not straightforwardly true that each extended thing is thinking, and thus it's not straightforwardly true that, for Spinoza, there are none but thinking things, even though each extended thing is identical to a thinking thing.

Let's move to a different characterization of idealism: each extended thing is reducible to, explained in terms of, thought. This view need not be one that eliminates bodies, but on this view bodies are less fundamental than mental things. One version of this view is Berkeley's view according to which bodies are merely a kind of representations.

Spinoza is certainly not an idealist in this sense. For Spinoza, as we have just seen, bodies are explained solely in terms of other bodies and extension. Minds are explained in terms of other minds and ultimately in terms of thought. So, as long as "to be is to be intelligible" is consistent

[9] See E2p7s, E2p21s.

[10] See M. Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind–Body Problem in Spinoza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), Chapters 7 and 8.

with this explanatory separation of the attributes, then "to be is to be intelligible" does not seem to lead to the form of idealism whereby extension is reduced to or is explained in terms of thought.

OK, you might say: but doesn't this miss the obvious point? If each thing is by its nature conceivable (or conceived) in a certain way, then built into the nature of each thing – whether extended or thinking or whatever – is a relation to a mind. Whether this mind is actual or merely possible doesn't matter, for there is a connection between the nature of each thing and thought, and thus, in particular, there is a connection between the nature of each extended thing, qua extended, and thought. The nature of each thing consists, at least in part, in the thing's availability to thought.

Doesn't this claim amount to a form of idealism? The quick and honest answer is: yes, yes, it does. Spinoza *is* a certain kind of idealist. There, I've said it; I've come out of the closet. But so what? It's worth reminding oneself that Spinoza never had a soul-baring moment in which he denied the accusation that he was an idealist. Still, doesn't the essential accessibility of all things to thought go against something fundamental in Spinoza? In particular doesn't this mental accessibility violate the conceptual and explanatory independence of the attributes, an independence that, as probably everyone acknowledges, is vital to Spinoza's system?

Well, let's see. The kind of mental accessibility I have allowed that Spinoza allows is perfectly compatible with separate explanatory chains for thinking things and for extended things. Let's follow out the explanatory chain that leads to a finite mode of extension. Call this mode of extension "Fred." Fred is explained by Sarah, another finite mode of extension, and by infinitely many other finite modes of extension in a chain going infinitely far back (E1p28). The explanatory chain includes, I would say, infinite as well as finite modes of extension, and it all is grounded in the attribute of extension. The only things that explain Fred are themselves extended things. Anything that serves as (part of) the explanation of Fred is itself extended. No mode of thought explains Fred, the mode of extension. Or at least no mode of thought qua mode of thought explains Fred, the mode of extension. Similarly, the attribute of extension is the (ultimate) explanation of Fred, the mode of extension. The attribute of thought is not.

Thus there are (at least) two separate explanatory tracks – one for the explanation of extended things, i.e., for the explanation of things conceived as extended, and one for the explanation of thinking things, i.e., for the explanation of things conceived as thinking. This separateness of

the explanatory chains is the heart of Spinoza's conceptual independence of the attributes. And it is certainly preserved even on the view that to be is to be intelligible. We can see why by expressing this view more perspicuously as the claim that to be extended is to be understood in terms of extension (and is not to be understood through any other attribute). Similarly, to be thinking is to be understood in terms of thought (and is not to be understood in terms of any other attribute).

Although explanation is itself a process carried on in thought and to speak of explanation is to speak of possible thought processes, the explanations themselves of extended things appeal only to things conceived as extended, not to things conceived as thinking. Each point in the explanatory chain leading up to a mode of extension is another thing conceived as extended and *not* a thing conceived as thinking. In other words, when an extended thing is explained, what is explained does not have the property of thought. Of course, explanations take place in thought and have the property of being thinking, but what is explained, on my reading, does not – as we have seen – have the property of thought, nor is it explained by anything having the property of thought. And that's all that Spinoza's explanatory barrier requires: each extended thing is explained only by extended things.

The explanatory barrier *would* be threatened by my view that to be is to be intelligible only if that principle were to entail that for a thing to be extended is for it to be explained as thinking or for it to be explained through other things that are explained as thinking. But my principle does not entail this; rather it entails only that to be extended is to be explained through extension or to be intelligible through extension. And that claim is certainly consistent with there being a separate explanatory chain for modes of thought, and thus it is consistent with Spinoza's explanatory barrier between the attributes. Thus although the PSR dictates that idealism holds in the sense that all things are, by their natures, accessible to thought, this idealism is consistent with Spinoza's explanatory separation between the attributes.

Perhaps, however, one can avoid this form of idealism and avoid any such connection between things in general and thought, while still affirming the PSR. Perhaps, at the essence of each thing are certain conceptual connections between it and other things or between it and itself, but these conceptual connections are not *psychological* connections and are not dependent on actual or possible *thoughts* (understood as psychological items). Samuel Newlands has developed such an approach in his

important paper, "Thinking, Conceiving, and Idealism in Spinoza."[11] On Newlands' view, the realm of concepts and their connections is distinct from the realm of (psychological) thoughts and the (psychological) grasping of concepts. The concept is also independent of extension or any other attribute. It hovers above or straddles the attributes in a non-psychological way, perhaps in something analogous to a Fregean, third realm-y kind of way. Thus, on this view, while the PSR dictates the dependence of each thing on concepts, these concepts are not mental entities. This approach would preserve the PSR and avoid idealism. But at what cost? First, there are textual considerations that are freely noted by Newlands: Spinoza glides between the conceptual and the psychological with an apparent ease that suggests that he may not be drawing the marked distinction this interpretation would favor. Second, what's the advantage in separating concepts from ideas and psychological states so sharply? Once we articulate – as I have – the point that even with the essential mental accessibility of all things, the explanatory barrier between the attributes is preserved, what more could we or Spinoza want? In this connection, I should note – although I cannot outline all this here – that versions of each of Newlands' four crucial desiderata (parallelism, plenitude, independence, and parity) are preserved on my account. These desiderata all reflect the explanatory barrier between the attributes. So in preserving the explanatory barrier, I am satisfying these additional desiderata.

If the independence of the attributes and the other related desiderata are thus preserved, then a question for Newlands' non-idealist reading becomes acute: what is a separate realm of concepts needed for? The picture with concepts seems to be uneconomical, an ontological or conceptual inflation for which there does not seem to be good reason in Spinoza. Of course, there is more debate to be had over Spinoza's attitude toward the conceptual and the psychological, but I wanted to give some indication here of why, in the end, I prefer my reading of Spinoza with its limited idealist connection and with its espousal of the essential accessibility of each thing to thought.

However, I am not sure that the explanatory separation can be maintained on my interpretation or on any other, for I think that the PSR puts pressure on Spinoza to go somewhere he may not want to go, to a place, that is, where any distinction among the attributes is undermined

[11] S. Newlands, "Thinking, Conceiving, and Idealism in Spinoza," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie*, forthcoming.

and to a place where idealism – of a kind different from any we have seen already – may hold.

WHAT KIND OF MONISM?

To demonstrate that the PSR puts pressure on Spinoza to deny that the attributes are distinct (and thus that Spinoza may be an idealist in a different sense), I want to explore the question: what kind of monism does the PSR lead to? I will argue that this monism may threaten the distinction of the attributes. Thus I will employ the question of Spinoza's monism to illuminate the question of Spinoza's idealism.

To approach this question, I would like to introduce a distinction recently highlighted and articulated by Jonathan Schaffer in an important series of papers.[12] First, there is an extreme form of monism that Schaffer calls "existence monism": on this view, there is only one object, and any multiplicity of objects, such as tables as distinct from chairs, is at best illusory. Only the one or the cosmos exists. Existence monism is to be contrasted with a weaker form of monism, priority monism, which holds that, while there is only one fundamental object, i.e., the cosmos or reality itself, things other than the one fundamental object may exist as dependent on the one fundamental object. Priority monism is weaker than existence monism in that priority monism allows that tables as distinct from chairs may exist. Priority monism simply requires that this multiplicity of things is dependent on the cosmos or the one fundamental object.[13]

Priority monism, taken by itself, is neutral as to what kind of dependence relation holds between the cosmos and the multiplicity of things that we know and love. One way to characterize this relation is in terms of what Descartes and others would call a modal distinction. Ordinary objects, such as tables and chairs, exist, but are mere modes or mere states, mere limitations, of the cosmos or the one substance. On this view, the table and the chair would be dependent on the one thing that is the cosmos, but the cosmos would not in turn depend on the table and chair. In this situation, the modes or states would be modally distinct from each

[12] See, e.g., J. Schaffer, "Monism: The Priority of the Whole," *Philosophical Review* 119 (2010), 31–76; and "Monism," in *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/monism/.

[13] Schaffer characterizes existence monism as the view that there is only one concrete object and priority monism as the view that there is only one fundamental concrete object. I do not want to help myself, as Schaffer does, to the concrete/abstract distinction, and indeed the version of existence monism that I see the PSR as pushing us toward (and beyond) is a version according to which, among other things, any distinction between the concrete and abstract is obliterated.

other and from the cosmos itself. This is how Spinoza's monism is, in effect, often interpreted: one fundamental object, God or nature, and a multiplicity of modes or states of that object that are merely modally distinct from each other and from the one fundamental object.[14]

Hegel, though, as is well known, seems to see Spinoza as going beyond mere priority monism of this kind. He seems to see Spinoza as, in effect, an existence monist, as denying the reality of (*inter alia*) finite things. Finite things, for Hegel's Spinoza, seem to vanish into the abyss of substance. As Hegel says:

> Substance, as it is apprehended immediately by Spinoza without preceding dialectical meditation – being the universal might of negation – is only the dark, shapeless abyss, so to speak, in which all determinate content is swallowed up as radically null and void, and which produces nothing out of itself that has a positive subsistence of its own. (EL, p. 227)

> There is therefore no such thing as finite reality; it has no truth whatever ["*Es ist also nichts in endlicher Wirklichkeit, dies hat keine Wahrheit*"]. (LHP, Vol. III, p. 281)

> [Spinoza] is able to renounce [*verzichten*] all that is determinate and particular. (LHP, Vol. III, p. 258)

> No actuality at all is ascribed to individual things. (LPR, p. 377)

I want to argue now that *in a way* Hegel is right in this reading of Spinoza. And this is, in part, because the PSR commits its proponents to something like existence monism or, rather, the PSR cannot countenance a monism as weak as priority monism. I will illustrate this commitment of the PSR by appealing to an argument from the British Idealist, F. H. Bradley, an argument that has the effect of demonstrating that the PSR is committed to existence monism or is at least committed to rejecting any weaker version of monism.[15]

[14] See, e.g., Y. Melamed, "Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance: The Substance–Mode Relation as a Relation of Inherence and Predication," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 78 (2009), 17–82. A contrary and prominent interpretation according to which ordinary objects are not mere modes of substance for Spinoza has been developed over a number of years by E. M. Curley. See, e.g., his classic work, *Spinoza's Metaphysics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

[15] The commitment of the PSR to monism can also be elicited by considering Hume's views on rational distinction in the *Treatise of Human Nature*. Hume, of course, rejects monism in any form, and so he rejects the PSR. I have begun to explore the connections between Hume and monism in general in M. Della Rocca, "Playing with Fire: Hume, Rationalism, and a Little Bit of Spinoza," in Della Rocca (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming), and in future work, I hope to develop the implications of Hume's thought for the connection between the PSR and existence monism in particular.

However, I will go on to qualify in two ways this commitment to existence monism that the PSR generates. First, I will argue that the version of existence monism that the PSR points to is compatible with – and, indeed, requires – a view according to which (at least) finite things enjoy some degree of existence, even if they are not fully existent, and I will argue briefly that Spinoza may recognize this qualification of existence monism. Second, I will argue that although priority monism and any kind of non-monistic view are to be rejected, existence monism – of even my nuanced variety that admits of degrees of existence – is to be rejected too. And, in particular, the same reasons – stemming from the PSR – that eliminate the full reality of a multiplicity of finite things also eliminate the full reality of the lone existing thing embraced by existence monism. In the context of Spinoza's system, the implication is that the reasons to which Spinoza would be sympathetic for rejecting the full reality of a multiplicity of finite things also commit one to the rejection of the full reality of any multiplicity of attributes and thus ultimately commit one to the rejection of the full reality even of Spinoza's one substance. Where the PSR thus leaves us is somewhere that is beyond monism – even beyond existence monism – and also, I fear, beyond Spinoza.

Before we are able to go beyond monism, we must show how the PSR leads to the rejection of priority monism and of any non-monistic view. To show that the PSR leads to something like existence monism, let's turn to a well-known Bradleyan argument that I will present in my own terms (while also calling attention to its Leibnizian pedigree). This argument proceeds through some of the PSR's implications for the reality of relations. Stripped to its barest bones, the argument is this: the PSR dictates that for each thing, there must be an explanation. Thus if two things, *x* and *y*, stand in a relation, there must be some thing or things that explain that relation, some thing or things in which that relation is grounded. So, if the relation exists or is real, there must be at least one thing in which that relation is grounded.

What could the ground be? The ground cannot be *x* alone as opposed to *y*. This is because there is no reason to locate the relation in *x* exclusively, to see the relation as grounded in *x* exclusively, given that there is equally good reason to see the relation as grounded in *y* instead. Similarly, the relation cannot be grounded in *y* exclusively because, if it were, then there would be no good reason that the relation is not grounded in *x* instead. In general, because grounding the relation in one of *x* or *y* exclusively would be arbitrary, the relation cannot be grounded in *x* or *y* exclusively. This step obviously proceeds via the PSR.

At this point, a natural thing to say is, of course, that while the relation cannot be grounded in one of *x* or *y* but not the other, it is grounded in *x* and *y* together, i.e., the relation depends on *x* and also depends on *y*, and is thus grounded in both together. In other words, the relation is partly grounded in *x* and partly grounded in *y*. Although this is more plausible than seeing the ground of the relation in only one of *x* or *y*, the PSR dictates that this move too is illegitimate.

If the relation between *x* and *y* were a state of *x* and *y* jointly, then this relation is determined by, explained by, grounded in, *x* and *y* together. The "jointly" and "together" here are crucial, for these terms indicate that the relation between *x* and *y* is grounded at least in part in the fact that *x* and *y* are together, the fact that they *coexist* with certain natures, i.e., the fact that they are related somehow. So the relation between *x* and *y* is grounded in their standing in a certain relation. But this is hardly an illuminating explanatory ground: at best it merely passes the buck to another relation that needs to be explained; at worst it is an out-and-out circular explanation. It's not an option for a proponent of the PSR to say that the relation is ungrounded or is grounded in other relations that are grounded in other relations and so on ad infinitum. To adopt such a view would be to say that ultimately there is no *thing* or things in virtue of which *x* and *y* stand in this relation. This result would violate the PSR. Thus there does not seem to be a way, consistent with the PSR, to see relations as real. This can also be seen as Leibniz's way of arguing against the reality of relations.[16]

I want to take the conclusion that relations are not real and apply it not just to the case of (apparent) relations between two substances (as Leibniz mostly does) but within a single substance. Thus consider the relation between a substance, *S*, and one of its states (or, if you prefer, modes), *m*. If *S* and *m* are distinct and thus not identical, they stand in a relation. What is this relation grounded in? It cannot be grounded in *S* alone or in *m* alone or in both together. So this relation within *S* seems – just like the relation between two distinct substances – also not to be real. Or at least this is the conclusion we reach if we apply the PSR consistently.

Leibniz doesn't make this move: although because of the PSR he denies the reality of relations between substances, he nonetheless fails to appreciate that the PSR equally leads to the denial of relations within a substance

[16] I have argued for this point in M. Della Rocca, "Violations of the Principle of Sufficient Reason in Leibniz and Spinoza," in F. Correiea and B. Schnieder (eds.), *Metaphysical Grounding* (Cambridge University Press, 2012), a chapter from which this paragraph and the previous two are adapted. In that chapter, I defend this argument against potential objections.

and thus to the denial of the reality of the substance–mode relation. Unlike Leibniz, Bradley is one who sees this point clearly, and he rejects what is, in effect, the substance–mode distinction on this basis.[17]

Here we've arrived at the view that distinctions between things and their states (what Descartes and others would call modal distinctions) are not legitimate and, more generally, any kind of genuine distinction between things is illegitimate. The PSR has led us to existence monism or to something like existence monism. And thus because Spinoza accepts the PSR, he is committed to existence monism or something like it. So perhaps Hegel's reading of Spinoza is correct.

But let me explain more fully why I've been saying that the PSR leads to "something like existence monism" and not simply that it leads to existence monism. There are two reasons for my vague qualifier here, and calling attention to these complexities will take us back to Spinoza and the issue of idealism.

Here is the first reason for my cagey qualifier. In saying that the PSR leads to something like existence monism, it may seem that I'm saying that rationalism entails that finite objects (among other things perhaps) are not real at all, and thus it might seem that finite objects are thrown into the abyss of unreality into which Hegel thought Spinozistic modes must vanish. But that is not exactly true: the PSR and the rationalist denial of multiplicity and distinctions lead us to expect that finite things and relations between things and their states exist *to some degree* even if they do not fully exist. What I am proposing is that existence be seen as coming in degrees, as not an either–or or on–off matter. I make this proposal because, given that, as we saw earlier, for the proponent of rationalism, existence is (or is at least coextensive with) intelligibility, it follows that things exist to the extent that they are intelligible. Thus given that there may be degrees of intelligibility, the PSR leads us to endorse the following corollary of the PSR:

Things exist to the extent that those things are intelligible.

This principle allows that there may be, somehow, things that are unintelligible to some degree, but it requires that these things do not fully exist. The principle would rule out not unintelligible things per se, but rather

[17] See F. H. Bradley, *Appearance and Reality* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1968), Book 1, Chapters 2 and 3. That the Bradleyan argument against the reality of relations turns on the PSR becomes very clear in Russell's response to Bradley: B. Russell, "Some Explanations in Reply to Mr. Bradley," *Mind* 19 (1910), 373–378 (pp. 373–374). See also Bradley, *Appearance and Reality*, pp. 514, 517.

unintelligible things that exist to exactly the degree that fully intelligible things do.

With degrees of existence in the picture (to some extent, of course!), we can once again allow distinct things, including modally distinct things, and we can allow relations some purchase in reality. We can allow these things just as long as we acknowledge that these things are not fully intelligible and do not fully exist. In the case of a relation between *a* and *b*, the relation would be partly intelligible in terms of *a*, partly intelligible in terms of *b*, but not fully intelligible in terms of either or both or in terms of anything else, and so the relation would not fully exist.

If, because of the PSR, we adopt such a view, then what kind of monism do we have? There would be, at most, only one thing that fully exists and it would (fully) have no modes or states because no modes or states would be fully intelligible or would fully exist. At the same time, modes and distinctions among things in general would enjoy some degree of existence and would not be completely banished from the realm of the existing. More accurately: such things would be banished from the realm of the fully existing, but they would occupy a place (that doesn't fully exist!) in the realm (that doesn't fully exist!) of things that exist to some degree but do not fully exist. This version of monism is like existence monism in the sense articulated by Schaffer because it allows that only one thing exists or at least exists fully. But it is a monism that is like priority monism in that it allows that there is (despite the overall monism) nonetheless a multiplicity of objects that are less fundamental than the cosmos. It's just that on this view this multiplicity of things does not fully exist. The problem with the dichotomy between existence monism and priority monism is that it presupposes as something common to both views the claim that existence does not come in degrees. Once we give up that assumption – and the PSR more or less dictates that we do – then the options for a monistic position in a rationalist context become richer. We can fully respect rationalism and the arguments from the PSR to the denial of relations, and at the same time we can accord relations and multiplicity the limited reality they deserve.

Before moving on to the second and perhaps more disturbing reason for my cageyness with regard to endorsing the entailment of existence monism by the PSR, let me consider briefly the first reason – i.e., the notion of degrees of existence – in connection with Spinoza. Does Spinoza accept the notion of degrees of existence? I believe it is plausible to read him this way. The heart of the commitment to degrees of existence is the equivalence of existence and intelligibility: it is this equivalence that makes it

natural, as I argued, to embrace the corollary of the PSR. And we do find that Spinoza embraces the equivalence of existence and intelligibility. As I mentioned, Spinoza explicitly identifies God's essence and God's existence in E1p20. As I have argued elsewhere,[18] because God's essence is just God's being conceived through itself (E1d3, E1d6), God's existence for Spinoza is just God's conceivability, i.e., God's being intelligible through itself. Further, Spinoza's naturalism and PSR dictate that just as God's existence is God's conceivability, so too the existence of things in general is just their conceivability or intelligibility: to think otherwise would be to see God and other things as playing by different rules. If, for these reasons, Spinoza accepts that finite things exist – but only to some degree – then Hegel's complaint that Spinoza's finite things have no reality cannot be quite right. Contra Hegel, finite individuals are not, for Spinoza, eliminated; they are merely given the lesser ontological status of not existing fully.

BEYOND MONISM

But now for the second, more far-reaching, and potentially upsetting qualification of my claim that the PSR entails something like existence monism. Let's focus for now on what fully exists. I have argued, in effect, that the PSR entails that there is no multiplicity of things and entails the rejection of any kind of non-monistic view. Still, does this result mean that existence monism is true or, to put the point more precisely, does this result mean that only one thing (the cosmos, nature) fully exists?

I'm afraid it does not. I'm afraid that, given the PSR, not only does multiplicity not (fully) exist, but also the cosmos does not (fully) exist. To see why, consider that if multiplicity or diversity as such is not fully real, then not only can there not be a multiplicity of finite objects or, if you like, finite modes, but also there cannot be any distinction between the one substance or the cosmos and any property of that substance, including any fundamental property of that object. Recall the beginning of the chapter when I introduced the notion of explaining or rendering intelligible. As I explained then, to explain a thing is to explain it *as* such-and-such. To conceive of a thing brutely, i.e. to conceive of a thing just as that thing, is not a way of rendering that thing intelligible. Genuine explanation or conceiving must get between (or "read between") an object and

[18] E.g., in Della Rocca, "A Rationalist Manifesto."

one or more of its properties so as to shed light – by contrast, as it were – on the thing itself. Bare conceiving of a thing, i.e., conceiving it not in terms of the properties of a thing, but in terms simply of the thing itself, is not a way of making the thing intelligible.

To see why the cosmos does not fully exist, start from the claim that in order for the cosmos to be intelligible, it must be conceivable in terms of one or more of its properties. So let's take the cosmos, call it *C*, and a property (presumably a fundamental property), *p*, of the cosmos. Now either *p* is identical to *C* or it is not. If *p* is identical to *C*, and *p* is the property in terms of which *C* is to be conceived or rendered intelligible, then *C* is to be conceived in terms of *C* itself. But this is bare conceiving and, as such, it is not genuinely explanatory. So, given the PSR, *C* and *p* must not be identical. But if *C* is not identical to *p*, then there is a relation of non-identity between *C* and *p*, and this relation is, like all relations, not intelligible. We can see why this is so by doing the Bradleyan (or Leibnizian) song and dance. What is the relation (call it *R*) between *C* and *p* grounded in? It cannot be grounded in *C* alone to the exclusion of *p*, or in *p* alone to the exclusion of *C* (that would be arbitrary). Nor can *R* be grounded in *C* and *p* together. That would be circular or would generate a regress thus undermining any fully legitimate explanation here. So if *C* and *p* are not identical, the relation of non-identity would not be intelligible and so there can be no such relation. But, as we saw, there must be a relation of non-identity between *C* and *p* in order for the cosmos to be intelligible (and thus to exist). So it turns out that – because of the PSR – the cosmos itself is not fully intelligible and does not fully exist.

Peter van Inwagen appreciates this point that a Bradleyan monism – which he correctly sees as motivated by the PSR[19] – leads to the non-existence of any relations whatsoever and ultimately to the non-intelligibility and non-existence of the world itself:

> Bradley's argument for the conclusion that there cannot be, in reality, two or more things depends on his argument for the conclusion that there are no external relations. And if this very complicated argument is correct, then a much simpler argument that claims to show that there are no intrinsic properties is correct. But if there are no intrinsic properties, then not even the One can exist. Thus the principles that Bradley uses in his attempt to refute the existence of a plurality of things, if valid, refute even the existence of the One.[20]

[19] P. van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, 3rd edn. (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 2009), pp. 44–45.
[20] *Ibid*.

And because van Inwagen is – unfortunately, in my view – no fan of the PSR,[21] he feels no pressure to embrace the view that no thing exists or fully exists. But van Inwagen is right to think that the PSR entails that no thing exists.

We should have seen this coming. At the beginning of the chapter, I noted that intelligibility is reading between or is discovering relations, and I noted that reasons are ratios or relations. But then we arrived at the argument – the rationalist argument – that relations are not (fully) real and do not (fully) exist. Thus, given that the intelligibility of a thing presupposes that it stands in relations and given that relations are not fully real because not fully intelligible, it follows that nothing is fully intelligible and thus nothing fully exists. Even the universe as recognized by existence monism does not fully exist. We cannot quantify over or treat as fully existent anything, not even the world itself.

In reaching this conclusion, I have certainly gone (as Bradley goes) beyond monism – for any form of monism would affirm the existence (or the fundamental existence) of the cosmos. So in denying that the cosmos fully exists and that anything else fully exists, I have gone beyond monism.

Can Spinoza make this move beyond monism? That is, can he embrace the second qualification, which denies any distinction between a substance and its properties and denies the full existence of nature or the cosmos or the substance? For Spinoza, there is one substance and a multiplicity of distinct attributes of that substance. Given the PSR-inspired, Bradleyan argument, these attributes are not in the end intelligible as distinct either from the substance or from each other. So, given the PSR, any multiplicity of attributes (for example) would have to be not real and would somehow be, at best, illusory.[22] This would be idealism in a sense different from that which I earlier allowed to be attributed to Spinoza – namely, the sense in which Spinoza is an idealist because it is the very nature of a thing to be explained or conceived or understood. The kind of idealism we have arrived at now is different. The distinction among attributes and between substance and each attribute is ideal because it is not real, and any such distinction is, at

[21] See P. van Inwagen, *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1983), pp. 202–204; and van Inwagen, *Metaphysics*, Chapter 7.

[22] Thus, because of the force of the Bradleyan argument, the unease I expressed about primitive individuation of attributes at the end of "Explaining Explanation" has given way to abandonment of the primitive individuation of attributes.

best, only an illusion of the intellect. *This* idealist reading has been attributed to Spinoza too, notably by Wolfson, who denies that the attributes, for Spinoza, are genuinely distinct from each other.[23] Hegel also interprets Spinoza this way: the difference between attributes "is a mere matter of the understanding, which is ranked by Spinoza only among affections … and as such has no truth" (LHP, Vol. III, p. 269). But, while Spinoza's commitment to the PSR may commit him to idealism in this sense, I have a hard time embracing the Wolfsonian reading as a legitimate interpretation of Spinoza. After all, Spinoza makes clear that he sees the infinite intellect as conceiving the essence of the substance through its many attributes (E2p7s). And this infinite intellect is, for Spinoza, the province of adequate and hence true ideas.[24] So I'm inclined not to see Spinoza as embracing a kind of Wolfsonian idealism.

But there is a further, more decisive reason for denying that the position I have arrived at can be attributed to Spinoza. The position I have arrived at not only leads to the denial that there is a multiplicity of attributes, it also leads to the denial of the full existence of the cosmos, i.e., nature, and thus the denial of the full existence of God itself. I don't, however, see how Spinoza can be read as denying that God exists or even that God fully exists.

Thus in affirming, as I have, that the PSR leads to the view that there cannot be a multiplicity of attributes and that substance or nature is not fully intelligible and does not fully exist, I have, with the guidance of the PSR, gone not only beyond monism, but also, I believe, beyond Spinoza.

Is this place beyond monism and beyond Spinoza a stable place? One way to see that it may not be is to ask the inevitable questions that arise once we have traveled this far with the PSR: what, then, is true (or fully true)? What is it, as the PSR requires, in virtue of which whatever is fully true is fully true and, in particular, what is it in virtue of which the PSR is true, if indeed it is true (or fully true)? If nothing fully exists, then nothing is available to fully ground the truth of any proposition, including the truth of the PSR itself. So the "place" beyond monism and beyond Spinoza may not even be one in which the PSR or anything else is fully true (or fully false for that matter, for falsehood, just like truth, must, it

[23] H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*, 2 vols., Vol. I (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), pp. 142–157.

[24] See E2p32 and Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind–Body Problem*, Chapter 6.

seems, have a ground). So, in the end, the PSR, which takes us beyond monism and beyond Spinoza, may also thereby take us beyond truth and falsity, even beyond the truth or falsity of the PSR itself. Perhaps, then, the PSR is like a ladder that we must, à la Wittgenstein, kick away at the end of our rationalist ascent. Once we do so, we will, perhaps, see the world aright, and what we cannot speak about …

CHAPTER 2

Kant's idea of the unconditioned and Spinoza's: the fourth Antinomy and the Ideal of Pure Reason

Omri Boehm

If Kant intended to destroy dogmatic metaphysics, then he must have taken Spinoza very seriously. What reason is more pure reason than that of Spinoza's *Ethics*? What is more dogmatic, by Kant's understanding of that term, than alleging to derive metaphysical theorems such as necessitarianism and substance monism from definitions and axioms? No philosophical position is more appropriate for Kant to assault than Spinozism, insofar as he seeks to undermine dogmatic rationalism – insofar as he pledges to make room for freedom and faith. But does Kant assault Spinozism? In the *Critique of Pure Reason*?

Many, perhaps most readers of Kant have not given the question much thought, on the assumption that the answer is obviously negative. Kant, it is assumed, was not interested in Spinoza, certainly not before the *Pantheismusstreit*. Many still operate on the assumption that Spinoza's reputation in Kant's day – before 1785 – was that of a defeated, forgotten philosopher, a "dead dog" as Lessing would have it. The prevalent metaphysical position at the time was Wolff's systematic presentation of Leibnizian principles; Spinoza, before the break of the *Pantheismusstreit*, was virtually ignored. Ernst Cassirer writes in this vein that Spinoza "seems hardly to have had any direct influence on eighteenth century thought."[1] This view has been at least one reason why Kant scholars – ever mindful of Humean and Leibnizian challenges – practically ignored Spinoza when interpreting the *Critique of Pure Reason*.[2]

I thank Ulrika Carlsson, Michael Della Rocca, and Karsten Harries.

[1] E. Cassirer, *The Philosophy of the Enlightenment*, trans. F. Koelln and J. Pettegrove (Princeton University Press, 1951), p. 187.

[2] Another reason is an oft-quoted letter, sent from Hamann to Jacobi, in which the former reports that Kant had told him, in a private conversation, that he had "never read Spinoza" and that he could never understand Spinoza's philosophy (Hamann to Jacobi, October 3, 1785, in J. G. Hamann, *Hamanns Briefwechsel*, ed. W. Ziesemer and A. Henkel, 6 vols. [Wiesbaden: Insel, 1955–1979], Vol. VI, p. 74). However, it is often overlooked that the context of Hamann's conversation with Kant renders the content of his report extremely doubtful. Elsewhere I comment on this issue

This approach must by now be contested. We know that Spinoza's metaphysics remained widely influential throughout the eighteenth century. A philosopher who received five times more attention than Descartes or Locke in Bayle's *Dictionnaire*, Diderot and J. d'Alembert's *Encyclopédie*, and Zedler's *Grosses Universal Lexikon* was certainly not ignored by the Enlightenment – indeed, could not be.[3] But we are still lacking a reading of Kant that does justice to this fact – that attends to the question of Spinoza's relevance to Kant's critique of Enlightenment rationalism. (The same gap exists in our understanding of the *Pantheismusstreit*. While nowadays the *Streit* receives much attention, scholars still operate on the assumption that it marks the moment in which Spinoza was rediscovered. The question must be raised how we are to understand the *Streit* in light of the realization that Spinoza had never been forgotten.[4])

Moreover, up until recently many still assumed that even after the break of the *Pantheismusstreit*, as the German intellectual scene was reeling with Spinoza and Spinozism, Kant stayed quite cold to the debate. And while more recent interpreters have done important work revealing that this is far from the truth – Kant did react to the *Streit* – these interpreters, too, as far as I can determine, maintain that Kant noticed Spinoza only late in his career.[5] There is a consensus, then, that even if at some point Kant became interested in Spinozism this happened only after he had written the *Critique of Pure Reason* – that he did so only in reaction to Jacobi's scandalous claim that Spinozism is the only possible rational philosophy.

Yet note that Kant, who in the first *Critique* doesn't mention Spinoza even once, begins, immediately after the break of the *Pantheismusstreit*, to repeat the claim that philosophical rationalism leads necessarily to Spinozism. Or, more accurately, the claim that Spinoza's philosophy is a necessary result of the old, dogmatic philosophy – a necessary result of transcendental realism. Here is an assortment of quotes, collected from the

in detail; see O. Boehm, "Kant and Spinoza Debating the Third Antinomy," in M. Della Rocca (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook to Spinoza* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming). See also Heman's discussion of that letter in F. Heman, "Kant und Spinoza," *Kant-Studien* 5 (1901), 273–339.

[3] For comprehensive discussion, see especially J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford University Press, 2001).

[4] For an important exception, see Israel's *Democratic Enlightenment: Philosophy, Revolution, and Human Rights*, 1750–1790 (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 684–720. In this recent volume, Israel discusses in more detail also Kant's reaction to Spinoza (see pp. 721–760). I interact with Israel's approach in my review of this volume, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, 6 February 2012.

[5] E.g., F. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987); J. Zammito, *The Genesis of Kant's Critique of Judgment* (University of Chicago Press, 1992); B. Lord, *Kant and Spinoza* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

days of the *Pantheismusstreit*. In Reflection 6050 Kant writes, "Spinozism is the true consequence of dogmatic metaphysics."[6] In the *Critique of Practical Reason* he writes that if transcendental idealism is denied, "nothing remains but Spinozism, in which space and time are essential determinations of the original being itself."[7] In *Lectures on Metaphysics* Kant pronounces: "if space is taken to be a thing in itself, Spinozism is irrefutable – that is, the parts of the world are parts of the Deity, space is God."[8] (The term 'Spinozism' can at times be vague; this passage suggests that he understands 'Spinozism' as substance monism.) And then again: "Those who take space as a thing in itself or as a property of things are forced to be Spinozists, i.e., they take the world as the embodiment [*Inbegriff*] of determinations from one necessary substance."[9]

These words come from an author who in the *Critique of Pure Reason* never mentioned Spinoza. They are the words of a philosopher who wrote a refutation of transcendental realism – mentioning in the book practically every name in the history of philosophy – but never mentioning the most consistent transcendental realist, Spinoza, or his philosophical position, Spinozism. What are we to make of this? One might come to the conclusion that Jacobi had an astonishing impact on Kant, that he taught him the greatest mistake of his life. Kant wanted to refute transcendental realism but, before Jacobi, he never adequately grasped what transcendental realism *was*. Or did he?

Things become more puzzling once we consider Jacobi's side of the story. For according to his well-known report, Jacobi in fact learned of the necessity of Spinozism from Kant (specifically, from the pre-critical "One Possible Basis for a Demonstration of the Existence of God"). How are we to understand this? Frederick Beiser certainly speaks for many when he dismisses Jacobi's reading of Kant as "tendentious." Jacobi, Beiser writes, "enthusiastically endorsed Kant's new proof of the existence of God … but he accepted it with one significant qualification, one that would have horrified Kant: namely, that it was true only for Spinoza's God. Kant, in Jacobi's view, had unwittingly demonstrated the necessity of pantheism."[10] But perhaps we should not dismiss Jacobi too quickly here. Kant was, as we saw above, very open to the thesis that Spinozism

[6] AA 18:436. All quotations from Kant's works are from AA by volume and page; the first *Critique* is cited by the standard A/B edition pagination. For English translations from the first *Critique* I have used KrV; for the second *Critique* I have used KrV. Translations from Kant's Reflections and from his lectures are mine.

[7] KpV, in AA 5:102. [8] AA 28:567. [9] AA 29:132.

[10] Beiser, *The Fate of Reason*, pp. 54f.

is a necessary consequence of transcendental realism. This openness may be related to his pre-critical position as a transcendental realist, and to his later position as a critic of transcendental realism. Does Kant already regard Spinozism as a necessary outcome of transcendental realism in the *Critique of Pure Reason*?

If he doesn't, we – and, by 1785, he – would have to be haunted by the thought that the book that was supposed to refute transcendental realism did not understand that position properly. This is potentially disastrous, especially when we consider the Antinomies of Pure Reason. The Antinomies are supposed to show that transcendental realism refutes itself, that it gets entangled in contradictions. For that purpose, Kant constructs what he takes to be – and this is just the point – the most consistent versions of transcendental realism, hoping to show that they conflict with one another. If in that undertaking Kant still hasn't discovered the most consistent form of transcendental realism, that consistent version is just the candidate to resolve the contradictions; the Antinomies would be completely disarmed.[11] I say this has a disastrous potential because, if this is so, Kant's ultimate proof of transcendental idealism would not get off the ground.

I will argue that in the *Critique of Pure Reason* Kant does already consider Spinozism the most consistent form of transcendental realism. I will begin with an interpretation of the Thesis of the fourth Antinomy (and its Observation), trying to demonstrate Spinoza's relevance there. Once this is granted, I will argue, his relevance must be recognized much more broadly in the *Critique* – most importantly in the other Antinomies and in the Ideal of Pure Reason.

Let us begin by examining more carefully the passage from the second *Critique*, a part of which was quoted above. Kant writes:

> I do not see how those who insist on regarding time and space as determinations belonging to the existence of things in themselves would avoid fatalism of actions; or if (like the otherwise acute Mendelssohn) they flatly allow both of them [time and space] to be conditions necessarily belonging only to the existence of finite and derived beings but not to that of the *infinite original being* – I do not see how they would justify themselves in making such a distinction, whence they get a warrant to do so, or even how they would avoid the

[11] Paul Franks discusses this problem in connection with the third Antinomy (see P. Franks and S. Gardner, "From Kant to Post-Kantian Idealism II," *Aristotelian Society Supplementary* 76 [2002], 229–246). Yet Franks too operates on the assumption that Kant was unoccupied with Spinozism as he wrote the first *Critique*. I interact with Franks' position in Boehm, "Kant and Spinoza Debating the Third Antinomy."

contradiction they encounter when they regard existence in time as a determination attaching necessarily to finite things in themselves, while God is said to be the cause of this existence but cannot be the cause of time (or space) itself.[12]

These shortcomings in the Leibnizian position bring Kant to assert that if transcendental idealism is not adopted, "only Spinozism remains, in which space and time are essential determinations of the original being itself, while the things dependent upon it (ourselves, therefore, included) are not substances but merely accidents inhering in it."[13] One reason to question the importance of this passage and its relevance to the first *Critique* is that it occurs only after the break of the *Pantheismusstreit*. The *Streit* may have changed Kant's mind; or he may have been merely repeating a slogan that became fashionable during the *Streit* – a slogan to which he had no genuine commitment.[14] A more substantial reason to doubt the importance of this passage is that it makes, in passing, a controversial philosophical claim. If Kant seriously holds the bold view that transcendental realism necessarily leads to Spinozism, he should have an argument in the offing. Much of an argument, however, we do not get. Kant claims that viewing space and time as "necessary properties" of finite conditioned beings but not of the unconditioned being that created them is arbitrary and inconsistent. But he never supports this claim much further. That is, why arbitrary? Why inconsistent? And why would such problems lead transcendental realism to Spinozism? Kant, I believe, does have an argument at his disposal. He had given this argument in the first *Critique* and implicitly assumes it in the above-quoted second *Critique* passage. The claim that transcendental realists cannot avoid Spinozism was in fact elaborated in the Thesis of the fourth Antinomy. Let us consider that Antinomy in a little more detail.

The fourth Antinomy revolves around the question of the existence of an unconditioned being. The Thesis states, "there belongs to the world, either as its part or as its cause, a being that is absolutely necessary" (A452/B480). The Antithesis states, "An absolutely necessary being nowhere

[12] KpV, in AA 5:101f.

[13] *Ibid*. Note that Kant mistakenly ascribes to Spinoza the view that time is an attribute. Of course, Spinoza regards thought, not time, as an attribute of substance along with space. This slip of the tongue is meaningful, for it shows that Kant conceives of Spinoza's position as analogous to his own, in which space and time are the two forms of intuition. (Time as a form of intuition is analogous to thought as an attribute because time is the medium in which all representation and thought take place.)

[14] I believe that many read Kant's comment in this way, but note that this reading is uncharitable. Moreover, Jacobi's thesis that Spinozism is the only possible rational philosophy, however fashionable, was very controversial – thus Kant is taking a non-obvious stand.

exists in the world, nor does it exist outside the world as its cause" (A453/B481). The argument for the Thesis seems to have two main stages. The first establishes the existence of an unconditioned being by a cosmological argument. The world contains a series of alternations, Kant writes, and transcendental realists are committed to viewing them as related to one another by an essentially causal-temporal grounding relation: one event follows by necessity from another, which precedes it in time. Moreover, transcendental realists, Kant argues, must assume that the series terminates – that the regressing grounding-series is complete. As a result, they are forced to assume that there is an unconditioned being – a ground of the series that is not itself grounded by a further condition (in any event not other than itself). Now, from this cosmological argument Kant moves, in the argument's second stage, to reflect on the connection between the unconditioned being and the worldly (conditioned) cosmological series. Is this unconditioned being – what Kant would later call the "infinite original being" – external to the series that it grounds or immanent to it? In the Observation on the Thesis Kant discusses that question at length. He writes that after the first part of the Thesis established the existence of the unconditioned by a cosmological argument, one must decide whether that being is "just *the world itself* or a thing distinct from it" ("*die Welt selbst*, oder ein von ihr unterschiedenes Ding"; A456/B484, my emphasis). This is an intriguing formulation, especially if one keeps in mind that Kant immediately proceeds to argue that the unconditioned is *not* distinct from the world. In this passage, the conclusion appears to be that the necessary being just is "the world itself."

However, careful reading may at first suggest that Kant's formulation is somewhat careless or inaccurate. His either/or formulation – either the unconditioned is distinct from the world or it is "the world itself" – may seem too quick, because Kant's position is that even if the unconditioned is immanent to the world two alternatives still remain. The unconditioned can be viewed as the complete series of conditioned elements, taken as a whole – hence "the world itself"; and it can belong to the world only as "the highest member of the cosmological series" – i.e., as a part of the series. Initially, then, we start with three possibilities in which the unconditioned's relation to the world can be conceived. It can be:

(1) Distinct from the world (not spatiotemporal); or
(2) The highest member of the cosmological series (spatiotemporal); or
(3) The "world itself," i.e., the whole cosmological series taken in its totality (spatiotemporal).

As said, Kant immediately rules out (1). The transcendental realist who views God as the ground of the world must see God as immanent to it. He argues the following:

> If we begin our proof cosmologically, resting it upon the series of appearances and the regress therein according to empirical laws of causality, we must not afterwards suddenly deviate from this mode of argument, passing over to something that is not a member of the series. Anything taken as condition must be viewed precisely in the same manner in which we viewed the relation of the conditioned to its condition in the series which is supposed to carry us by continuous advance to the supreme condition. If, then, this relation is sensible and falls within the province of the possible empirical employment of the understanding, the highest condition or cause can bring the regress to a close only in accordance with the laws of sensibility, and therefore only in so far as it itself belongs to the temporal series. (A458/B486)

The argument asserts a general principle, which is then applied to the specifics of transcendental realism. This principle appears in the middle of the passage: "Anything taken as condition must be viewed precisely in the same manner in which we viewed the relation of the conditioned to its condition in the series which is supposed to carry us by continuous advance to the supreme condition." By 'conditioned' Kant thinks quite generally of objects of cognition such as things or states of affairs.[15] By 'condition' he understands a ground or a cause – a conditioned is explained by its condition. (Kant speaks of 'conditions' interchangeably with 'grounds,'[16] the latter being what one cites in answer to why-questions.[17]) Moreover, reason induces us to assume that in order for any conditioned to be genuinely grounded (by a condition), the series of conditions must terminate – it must be complete, and for that reason must itself be grounded in some supreme condition. Thus Kant states the following principle: the grounding relation between the unconditioned and the conditioned cosmological series that it grounds must be of the same type as that obtaining between the conditioned members of the series themselves.

This principle is quite plausible. In any cosmological argument for the existence of an unconditioned being, one concludes that an unconditioned being exists *because* it is a necessary condition of terminating a regressing grounding series (that's the first part of the argument). Therefore, we are in the first place justified in positing the existence of the unconditioned being only if it has this explanatory power. However,

[15] This is apparent from the way he applies that word in other antinomies; for example, in the first Antinomy 'conditioned' is unpacked as things, in the third as events, etc.

[16] AA 20:328. [17] Cf. AA 24:921.

it has this explanatory power only if it stands in the same grounding relation to the series as the members within the series stand to one another. The unconditioned doesn't explain the termination of the regressing series if it doesn't share its essential property. We cannot see how a being that doesn't stand in time terminates a temporally regressing series.[18]

The Thesis of the fourth Antinomy applies this principle to transcendental realism. Transcendental realists view explanatory grounding relations among things in the world as causal-temporal. They assume that the condition (ground) exists in a time prior to the conditioned – that the latter comes into existence by necessity following the former. Moreover, every such explanatory ground – every condition – itself came into existence in time, i.e., in a moment following a previous condition. (If the condition itself always existed and did not come into being at a certain moment in time, the conditioned following from it would also have always existed. Kant argues for this in the Thesis of the third Antinomy [A445/B473].) This generates a regressing causal-explanatory series, which is "supposed to carry us by continuous advance to the supreme [unconditioned] condition" (A452f./B480f.). And because it is the explanatory power of causal (temporal) dependence relations that establishes the existence of a necessary being, we must appeal to the same explanatory relation obtaining between the unconditioned and the conditioned series itself – i.e., the world. Therefore, the relation between the unconditioned and the world is causal-temporal. This means, for Kant, that the unconditioned condition exists in time prior to the existence of the (first) conditioned being. Therefore, the unconditioned being exists in time. If time is viewed as a property of things, time is a property of the unconditioned. The unconditioned being must be, as Kant says, immanent to the temporal series – either as a part of the regressing series (as in [2]), or as that series itself taken as a whole (as in [3]).

As I said, this argument rules out (1), the transcendent model of the unconditioned. If transcendental realism is true, and we assume that the unconditioned is the ground of spatiotemporal finite beings, then it is not distinct from the world. This excludes the Wolffian–Leibnizian position, and it presents an argument for *much* of Kant's later claim, in the context of the *Pantheismusstreit*, that transcendental realism cannot avoid Spinozism. Recall his abbreviated reasoning in the second *Critique*: Kant

[18] Without claiming any actual historical influence, Kant's position here is analogous to Spinoza's criticism of Descartes' endorsement of interaction between bodies and minds. As Spinoza famously argues, interaction is only possible between things that share an attribute. The impossibility of mind–body interaction is analogous to the (im)possibility of creation.

excludes the Leibnizian position by claiming that it is illegitimate to regard the unconditioned as the cause of created finite beings that essentially exist in time and space but, at the same time, deny that the unconditioned (the "original being") is itself spatiotemporal. He has in mind in this passage the argument he had given in the *Critique of Pure Reason*.

On a first look, however, that argument does not support *everything* that Kant claims in the second *Critique* passage. There, he stated the bolder thesis that because transcendental realists cannot but regard the unconditioned being as spatiotemporal they are committed to Spinozism. The fourth Antinomy, at first glance, doesn't give us quite so much, because here transcendental realists still have two ways of viewing the unconditioned. They can view the unconditioned as "the world itself" or they can view it as a part of the regressing series. The first alternative is as explicitly Spinozist as it gets, but the second option is not Spinoza's. Here at least it could seem that transcendental realists – contrary to Kant's bold statement in the second *Critique* – have a non-Spinozist way out.

Upon a second look, however, there is no genuine way out – not insofar as Kant is concerned. For if the unconditioned is 'only a part' of the series but exists in time (on that view, it does), then it has always existed in time. But if it always existed in time, so did the cosmological series necessarily following from it – which accordingly always exists as a whole. (As Kant writes, if a temporal unconditioned cause always existed, "its consequence would have also always existed" [A444/B472]. Thus whatever possibly follows from that unconditioned always exists as a whole.) Hence once the transcendent view of the unconditioned is not available – and it is not available to transcendental realists – their view collapses into *some sort* of Spinozism. This justifies exactly Kant's claim in the second *Critique*.[19]

We might conclude that the *Pantheismusstreit* did not change Kant's view of the Leibnizian position. He had seen its collapse into the radical,

[19] The fourth Antinomy is probably the only discussion within the *Critique of Pure Reason* that attracted some comparison to Spinoza's. Heinz Heimsoeth discusses Spinozism as one source of the position Kant takes (see H. Heimsoeth, "Le continu métaphysique de la Quatrième Antinomie de Kant," in L. Beck, Y. Belaval, and S. L. Bruch [eds.], *L'histoire de la philosophie: Ses problèmes, ses méthodes* [Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1964], pp. 89–91). Heimsoeth writes that Spinoza's doctrine, "telle que Kant la connaissait ou l'imaginait, a été, pour lui toujours, plus qu'on ne le remarque ordinairement, l'objet de méditations critiques, et cela précisément au cours de l'itinéraire qui le menait vers sa position definitive." Even Sadik Al-Azm, who maps all four Antinomies onto the Leibniz–Clarke correspondence, comes close to conceding that, in the case of the fourth Antinomy, the Leibnizian position is in fact Spinozist (S. Al-Azm, *The Origins of Kant's Arguments in the Antinomies* [Oxford University Press, 1972], p. 117f.). More recently, Michelle Grier offers some discussion of Spinoza as a possible historical source of the argument (M. Grier, *Kant's Doctrine of Transcendental Illusion* [Cambridge University Press, 2001], pp. 224f.).

Spinozist, position all along. In this connection, note a comment Kant makes in the second *Critique* immediately after saying that transcendental realism is committed to Spinozism: "One might rather say that the dogmatic teachers of metaphysics have shown more shrewdness than sincerity in keeping this difficult point out of sight as much as possible, in the hope that if they said nothing about it no one would be likely to think about it."[20] Now the Thesis of the fourth Antinomy is crucial for our understanding of the other three Antinomies as well. That Thesis lays out two ways in which transcendental realists can conceive the unconditioned and its relation to the world – either as (2) or as (3) above – and the Antinomies are generated by clashing those two against one another. In fact, Kant makes the same observation explicitly at the outset of the Antinomies, writing that the unconditioned can be conceived in "either of two ways": as an infinite series in which "all the members without exception are conditioned and only the totality of them is absolutely unconditioned"; or as "only a part of the series – a part to which the other members are subordinated, and which does not itself stand under any other condition" (A417/B445). These two conceptions of the unconditioned – which clearly correspond to the two possible conceptions present in the fourth Antinomy – generate the antinomies: the first three Theses correspond to the second model ([2] in the fourth Antinomy); the first three Antitheses correspond to the first model ([3] in the fourth Antinomy, i.e., the one in which the cosmological series is the unconditioned itself). This suggests that all three Antitheses are to be read as Spinozist positions. Elsewhere I argue for the case of the first and third Antinomies;[21] it would be useful briefly to reiterate this interpretation here.

It has become common to map the historical origins of the Antinomies onto the Leibniz–Clarke correspondence, following Sadik Al-Azm's influential interpretation.[22] On that view, the Theses correspond to Clarke's Newtonian position, while the Antitheses correspond to Leibniz's. Thus, in the case of the first Antinomy, whereas the Thesis assumes space and time to be Newtonian "empty containers," the Antithesis expresses a Leibnizian rejection of empty containers by an argument from the Principle of Sufficient Reason (PSR). In the case of the third

[20] KpV, in AA 5:102.

[21] O. Boehm, "The first Antinomy and Spinoza," *British Journal for the History of Philosophy*, 19 April, 2011, pp. 683–710; "Kant and Spinoza Debating the Third Antinomy."

[22] Al-Azm, *The Origins*. Ernst Cassirer in fact preceded Al-Azm with such an interpretation. For a thorough discussion, see L. Kreimendahl, *Kant: Der Durchbruch von 1769* (Köln: Dinter, 1990), pp. 156–85.

Antinomy – so the argument goes – the Thesis reflects Newton's occasionalist position, whereas the Antithesis reflects Leibniz's determinist exclusion of freedom – also by an argument from the PSR.[23]

This reading has been assumed by influential commentators[24] but it suffers from severe inaccuracies, some more obvious than others. Regarding the first Antinomy, for example, it must be noted that despite rejecting Newtonian empty containers by an argument from the PSR Leibniz does not affirm the world's infinity: he affirms rather that the world is indefinite, reserving infinity exclusively for God.[25] (This is telling, because Kant was aware of the infinite/indefinite distinction [A511–515/B539–543] and does use the term "infinite" in articulating the first Antithesis.) Moreover, Leibniz certainly doesn't deny, but affirms, that the world is created. The position articulated in the first Antithesis is therefore clearly not Leibnizian. As for the third Antinomy, Leibniz does not offer an argument from the PSR against freedom. Although a determinist, Leibniz argues that freedom and the PSR are complementary – freedom for Leibniz is *required* for sufficient explanation. (Thus, if anything, Leibniz's position – his doctrine of infinite analysis – is similar to the argument of the first Thesis.) Al-Azm briefly comments on this fact, writing that Leibniz's determinist position is "couched in the language of freedom."[26] This is misleading. Leibniz was a compatibilist, who denied freedom no more than he denied the world's creation. The Antithesis position reflects Spinozist, not Leibnizian, metaphysics, in which the unconditioned just is "the world itself." Kant's claim, in the context of the *Pantheismusstreit*,

[23] Al-Azm, *The Origins*, pp. 87–90.

[24] Henry Allison, for example, endorses Al-Azm in his account of the first and the third Antinomies (for the first Antinomy see H. Allison, *Transcendental Idealism: Interpretation and Defence* [New Haven: Yale University Press, 1983], p. 38; for the third Antinomy see H. Allison, *Kant's Theory of Freedom* [Cambridge University Press, 1990], pp. 27f.).

[25] The infinite/indefinite distinction is more often associated with Descartes than with Leibniz. Moreover, Leibniz is sometimes remembered as affirming an infinite (rather than an indefinite) number of monads. However, while he uses the infinite/indefinite terminological distinction less carefully than Descartes, Leibniz insists that the world cannot be regarded as a *whole*, which implies that he considers it indefinite rather than infinite. Consider the following passage from the *New Essays*:

> Descartes and his followers, in making the world out to be indefinite so that we cannot conceive of any end to it, have said that matter has no limits. They have some reason for replacing the term "infinite" by "indefinite," for there is never an infinite whole in the world, though there are always wholes greater than others *ad infinitum*. As I have shown elsewhere, the universe itself cannot be considered to be a whole. (G. W. Leibniz, *New Essays on Human Understanding,* trans. P. Remnant and J. Bennett [Cambridge University Press, 1981], p. 151)

[26] Al-Azm, *The Origins*, p. 87.

that transcendental realists are "forced to be Spinozists" is well expressed in the Antinomies of Pure Reason.

The Ideal of Pure Reason, too, deserves to be studied in connection with the fourth Antinomy. The Ideal is a notion of an unconditioned being, and the fourth Antinomy gives us at least a clue to Kant's understanding of such a notion. Of course, that clue has to be used cautiously. There are important differences between the Ideal and the unconditioned discussed in the fourth Antinomy, most significantly the fact that the Ideal is not generated from a transcendentally real cosmological conception, and for that reason need not be conceived as spatiotemporal itself.

However, it is helpful to remember that in the fourth Antinomy Kant invoked at least one principle that applies not only to transcendental realism. He claimed that the grounding relation between the unconditioned and the conditioned series that it grounds has to be "viewed exactly in the same manner" as the grounding relation obtaining between conditioned and condition. If we are to think of the Ideal as a ground of a cosmological series of any sort – and we do: the Ideal is thought of as the ultimate ground of *all possibility* – then it must be thought of as belonging in some sense to the series that it grounds. If the Ideal is to serve as the ultimate ground of possibility, there cannot be a *Spaltung* – a bifurcation – between the Ideal and what it grounds; it must be immanent to the series. Kant indeed conceives of the Ideal as the "All of reality" ("All der Realität"): every possibility, insofar as it is real, is just a limitation (*Einschränkung*) of this "All." I will return to this notion presently; let me say another word about what exactly the "All of reality" grounds, namely 'material possibility.'

As Kant already explains in the pre-critical "One Possible Basis," the notion of possibility must be analyzed into two components – a formal component and a material one.[27] Formal possibility is the conceptual coherence, or the consistent relation among predicates. A concept is formally possible if and only if there is no contradiction among its predicates. The material element of possibility is on that analysis of those predicates themselves, among which coherence (or lack thereof) is asserted: these predicates must be given (*gegeben*), available to thought in order for the concept to be formally possible or not. For example, a 'right triangle' is formally possible in virtue of the fact that there is no contradiction between 'being a triangle' and 'having an angle of 90 degrees.'

[27] I analyze Kant's argument in more detail in "Kant's Regulative Spinozism," in *Kant-Studien* (forthcoming).

It is materially possible in virtue of what Kant calls the availability, or givenness, of the predicates: "being a triangle," "having a right angle." Of course, in the example, "being a triangle" itself has to be (and is) formally and materially possible: 'being a triangle' is possible because there is no contradiction between 'having three sides' and 'being a closed shape,' and those predicates must themselves be given as material elements of possibility, which ground the possibility of a triangle. We can continue to analyze these predicates into their further material elements, and this generates a series – regressing from conditioned to condition – in which one element is grounded by another. As Kant recognizes, however, at some point we reach properties that are fundamental – they cannot be analyzed into further material conditions (e.g. extension). In order for this regressing series of material conditions of possibility to ground the series, those fundamental properties, those fundamental building blocks of possibility, must somehow themselves be grounded – the question is how. According to Kant, they must be grounded in a being that exists and actually has those properties – a being that exemplifies them.

As Robert Adams pointed out, Kant's thinking here, which is in many ways similar to Leibniz's, is in an important sense not Leibnizian.[28] Like Kant, Leibniz had claimed that possibility assumes a material element, and like Kant he claimed that that element must be grounded. Nevertheless, Leibniz thought that the unconditioned, God, can serve as the ground of material possibilities by *thinking* them (thus God's intentional properties, in Leibniz, can serve as grounds of non-intentional properties). Kant does not allow this. He insists that the unconditioned can be thought of as the ground of material possibilities only as actually having these properties – it cannot be said to ground properties by thinking of them (or by thinking them).[29] I haven't seen Kant arguing for this departure from the Leibnizian position, but one reason behind it may be the principle we saw at work in the fourth Antinomy. In order for the unconditioned to serve as a terminating ground of the regressing series, the relation between the unconditioned ground and the members of the series must be the same relation as that obtaining between the members of the series itself. In order to ground spatial relations between shapes, for example, the unconditioned must be extended. To say that extension is grounded by thought of extension would be to deviate from the explanatory mode within the

[28] R. Adams, "God, Possibility and Kant," *Faith and Philosophy* 17/4 (2000), 425–440.

[29] For a recent, thorough discussion, see A. Chignell, "Kant, Modality, and the Most Real Being," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 91/2 (2009), 157–192.

series, which Kant disallows. In this sense, what was said of the unconditioned in the fourth Antinomy must be said of the Ideal: even if thinking of it in regulative terms, the unconditioned cannot be conceived as separate from the cosmological series. It must be conceived as immanent to it – either as the highest member of the series or as that series itself taken as a whole.

This basic idea, that possibilities must be grounded in a being that actually exemplifies their fundamental properties, brings Kant to argue that all material possibility must be ultimately grounded in one *ens realissimum* – that being which serves the ground of *all* possibility by actually exemplifying the most fundamental material grounds of possibility. A crucial question here is why Kant thinks a single being is necessary: why must all properties be grounded by one being and not by several? Why not assume, for example, that all possibilities are grounded in different platonic ideas that provide material grounding of different fundamental possibilities? The answer has to do with the need to ground relations between different possibilities. Arguably it is impossible to ground all relations and possible relations between possibilities if their grounds are scattered in different beings. (Had two different beings done the grounding, the relations between those beings would have had to be grounded as well. However, only a third being can ground such a relation [for saying that both beings ground this relation together circularly assumes that they stand in a certain relation, namely coexistence]. Therefore, only a single being can ground all relations.) This was also the position taken by Leibniz, in his proof of the existence of God from the existence of necessary truths, and we may say that Kant's insight here is in some sense Leibnizian.[30] As we have seen, however, there is also a difference between Kant and Leibniz: whereas Leibniz allows that the unconditioned being grounds possibilities by thought, Kant thinks that it can ground them only by actually having them as properties. This is why Kant's *ens realissimum* – the ground of all possibility – turns out very differently from a Leibnizian *realissimum*. Here is how Kant describes it in the *Critique of Pure Reason*:

> [If] reason employs in the complete determination of things a transcendental substrate that contains, as it were, the whole store of material from which all possible predicates of things must be taken, this substrate cannot be anything else than the idea of an All of reality (*omnitudo realitatis*). All true negations are nothing but limitations [*Einschränkungen*] – a title which would be inapplicable,

[30] Cf. Adams' discussion in "God, Possibility and Kant."

were they not thus based upon the unlimited, that is, upon "the All." (A575/B603)

And again:

All possibility of things must therefore be regarded as derivative, with only one exception, namely, the possibility of that which includes in itself all reality. This latter possibility must be regarded as original. For all negations (which are the only predicates through which anything can be distinguished from the *ens realissimum*) are merely limitations of a greater, and ultimately of the highest, reality; and they therefore presuppose this reality, and are, as regards their content, derived from it. *All manifoldness of things is only a correspondingly varried mode of limiting the concept of the highest reality which forms their common substratum, just as all figures are only possible as so many different modes of limiting infinite space* … We cannot say that a primordial being consists of a number of derivative beings, for since the latter presupposes the former they cannot themselves constitute it. The idea of the primordial being must therefore be thought as simple … The primordial being [cannot be] treated as a mere aggregate of derivative beings … On the contrary, *the supreme reality must condition the possibility of all things as their ground, not as their sum*. (A578f./B606f; my emphasis)

In order to conceive all possibilities as ultimately grounded, we must conceive them as mere limitations of one unconditioned being. On this view everything that is possible – insofar as it is real – is but a limitation of the *realissimum*, the All of reality. I take this to be a Spinozist construal of the *realissimum* – one might say that the Ideal is regulatively Spinozist.[31]

To be sure, interpreters commonly assume a different reading of these passages. On the common view Kant's *realissimum* grounds all possibility, but only *fundamental* possibilities are grounded as its properties (what Kant calls determinations [*Bestimmungen*]). Complex, finite beings are produced from these properties – and are in this sense grounded in the Ideal – but not as its properties. They are consequences (*Folgen*) of those fundamental properties, and as such can be regarded as ontologically distinct; they do not inhere in the *realissimum*. Notice, however, that such a position involves what Kant views (and, in the fourth Antinomy, excludes) as a deviation in the mode of grounding. Given that the unconditioned

[31] One might wonder by what right Kant transforms the pre-critical proof into a merely regulative ideal (see M. Fisher and E. Watkins, "Kant on the Material Ground of Possibility: From the Only Possible Argument to the *Critique of Pure Reason*," *Review of Metaphysics* 52/2 [1998], 369–397; I. Logan, "Whatever Happened to Kant's Ontological Argument?," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 74/2 [2007], 346–363). Elsewhere I argue that Kant does present an argument for this transformation – namely his criticism of the "Supreme Principle of Pure Reason." This had been noticed, but not elaborated, by Dieter Henrich: D. Henrich, *Der Grund im Bewußtsein: Untersuchungen zu Hölderlins Denken (1794–1795)* (Stuttgart: Klett–Cotta, 1992), pp. 50f.

grounds fundamental properties by having them as properties, one ought not to deviate to another grounding relation in explaining the relation between fundamental properties and the complex possibilities that they ground. Moreover, Kant's words are unequivocal: he says that all possibility, insofar as it is real, is but a limitation of the "All of reality"; why then should we suppose that there is any real possibility that is not a mere limitation of that "All"?

There is one line in the passage quoted above that is repeatedly invoked in the literature in support of the common, non-Spinozistic reading; it is supposed to give evidence that even if complex, finite things are grounded by the Ideal, they are external to it. In this line (emphasized above) Kant writes that the *realissimum* is the ground but not the sum of all reality: "the supreme reality must condition the possibility of all things as their ground, not as their sum" (A578f./B606f.). To many, this has suggested that Kant here distinguishes between the *realissimum* and Spinozism. Henry Allison writes, "[Kant's] prime concern was to avoid the Spinozistic implications of the identification of God with the sum total of reality"; for that reason Kant insists, thinks Allison, that the ideal relates to all possibilities "as their ground, not as their sum."[32] Paul Franks similarly writes, "it is true that Kant talks at first of the *omnitudo realitatis* as if it were identical with the *ens realissimum*, which might suggest a Spinozist construal. But Kant explicitly revises his formulation, indicating that the *omnitudo realitatis* is *grounded* in God, so that God is not to be identified with the sum-total of all reality."[33] Franks refers, as evidence, to the same line quoted by Allison (A579/B607).[34] In my view, while both commentators correctly sense the relevance of Spinoza in this passage they misinterpret Kant's conception of the unconditioned, as well as Spinoza's. We should not expect that Kant, if holding a Spinozist conception of the unconditioned, would think of it as the sum total of all reality. Certainly Spinoza himself did not think of the unconditioned in this way; he viewed substance as ontologically priori to its 'parts' (modes are therefore mere *limitations* of substance) – he thought of substance precisely as the ground rather than the sum of all reality. Significantly, this is something that Kant himself sees and insists upon when writing about Spinoza. Classifying the forms of Pantheism in *Lectures on Metaphysics*, Kant explains Spinozism as a special type of Pantheism in which the

[32] Allison, *Transcendental Idealism*, pp. 403f.

[33] P. Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 96f.

[34] *Ibid*.

unconditioned is not an aggregate, not the sum total, but the ground of reality:

> Pantheism still has Spinozism as a special kind … [For] Pantheism is either one of inherence, and this is Spinozism, or one of the aggregates … Spinoza says: the world is inhering in God as accidents, and so worldly substances are his consequences [*Wirkungen*], and in itself exists only one substance … *In Spinozism God is the ground* [*Urgrund*] *of everything that is in the world. In Pantheism he is an aggregate of everything that is in the world.*[35]

In fact, Kant writes explicitly, at least later in his career, that the *ens realissimum*, the ground of all possibility, must be conceived along Spinozist lines:

> The *conceptus originarius* of Being in general, which is supposed to be the ground of all concepts of things, is a concept of the *ens realissimum*. All concepts of negations are derivative, and so we must first have real concepts if we want to have negative ones. The embodiment [*Inbegriff*] of all realities is considered also as the stock [*Magazin*] from which we take all the matter for the concepts of all beings. Philosophers name "evil" the formal, and "good" the material. This formal can mean only the limitation [*Einschränkung*] of all reality, through which things [*Dinge*] with realities and negations, i.e. *finite things are produced*. All difference between things is thus a difference of form … All *conceptus* of *entia limitata* are *conceptus derivativi* and the *conceptus originarius* for our reason is that of an *ens realissimum*. If I deduce the existence of an *ens realissimum* from its concept, this is the way to Spinozism.[36]

As this passage suggests, the main difference between Kant's critical position and Spinozism consists in the fact that Kant does not deduce the existence of the *realissimum* from its concept. In this sense, his position can be entitled 'regulative Spinozism.' This suggests that, already in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, Kant considered Spinozist metaphysics the most consistent form of dogmatic rationalism. The success – or the failure – of the critical project deserves to be evaluated in this light.

[35] AA 28:794–795 (my translation and emphasis).
[36] AA 28:785–786 (my translation and emphasis).

CHAPTER 3

"The question is whether a purely apparent person is possible"

Karl Ameriks

Schleiermacher's early private notes (1793–1794) concerning Spinoza[1] are unique because of the way in which they *combine* a highly sympathetic reception of Spinozism with a detailed appreciation of Kant's complex criticism of rational psychology. In a series of slightly earlier essays Schleiermacher is very negative about Kant, because of the Critical doctrine of absolute freedom, but in the "Spinozism Notes" Schleiermacher finds resources within Kant's Critical doctrine of the self that suggest to him a new way in which to appropriate Jacobi's provocative suggestion of *positive* links between Spinoza and Critical Idealism. Although I will be arguing that, in the end, Kant is not as close to Spinoza as Schleiermacher suggests, this is not to deny that the impressive "Spinozism Notes" still provide an ideal starting point for a *contemporary* assessment of the relation of their philosophies.

A FIRST LOOK AT REACTIONS TO SPINOZA

Despite Kant's constant commitment (from the early 1760s on) to the moral conception of the person as an absolutely free individual, his ultimate *theoretical* position on the individual self, just as on the in-itself character of things in general, can appear to be a deeply unsettling form of agnosticism with regard to content: there *is* "something" there, but we cannot at all determine what it is. A striking expression of this position can be found in the first-edition Paralogisms:

The author is indebted to conference participants at Vienna and Baltimore, and also especially to Kirsten Leuschner, Colin Marshall, Yitzhak Melamed, and Violetta Waibel. The title quotation is from KGA, Vol. 1/1:538, quoted in J. Mariña, *Transformation of the Self in the Thought of Friedrich Schleiermacher* (Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 80; see below, n. 29. Translations from Schleiermacher are my own except when quoted from Mariña.

[1] KGA, Vol. 1/1:511–582.

[T]his Something that lies at the ground of outer appearances and affects our sense so that it receives the representations of space, matter, shape, etc. – this Something, considered as noumenon (or better, as transcendental object) could also at the same time be the subject of thoughts … thus, if we compare the human soul with matter regarded (as one should) merely as appearance, then with regard to their substrates they [matter and soul] are not at all sufficiently distinguished, even if we assume the simplicity of the soul's nature [as an object of inner sense].[2]

One can compare this statement with a passage that Schleiermacher quotes from Jacobi, and that expresses complete exasperation about a somewhat similar view: "We only believe that we act out of anger, love, magnanimity, or a rational decision. Sheer illusion! In all these cases what ultimately moves us is a Something that *knows nothing* about all this …"[3] Here Jacobi is discussing Spinoza, rather than Kant, but at this point this distinction would not matter much to him, since elsewhere (as Schleiermacher notes) Jacobi encourages regarding the Spinozist view that we are finite modes moved by an underlying and ungrasped "Something," as very similar to Kant's view that, as humans, we are spatiotemporal phenomena *grounded* in something in itself that is quite unlike its appearance.

In presenting his own position, Schleiermacher picks up on this comparison, and he explicitly *juxtaposes* the relation between Spinoza's all-inclusive infinite substance, and the finite and empirical modes (especially human beings) that it grounds, with the relation between Kant's realm of things in themselves and the spatiotemporal appearances that it grounds, in a way that "almost identifies the Spinozist relation between noumenon and phenomenon with the Kantian relation between them."[4] In this way Jacobi and Schleiermacher each follow a *uniform* pattern of approaching Spinoza and Kant, that is, one proposing that, at a fundamental

[2] KrV (1781), A358–359; translations are my own unless otherwise indicated. The context makes clear that when Kant concludes "they are not at all sufficiently distinguished," what he means is simply that we cannot say that the "thing in itself" (A357) "that lies at the ground of" the phenomenon that is a "human soul" (which is a "non-extended" and "non-composite" appearance) differs *in kind* from the thing in itself "that lies at the ground of" the phenomenon that is an extended appearance. He is not here advancing the suggestion that *numerically* there is no distinction between the "Something that lies at the ground" (i.e., the "in itself") of an individual subject and that of the outer appearances that the subject "receives."

[3] "Wir glauben nur, daß wir aus Zorn, Liebe, Großmuth, oder aus vernünftigem Entschluß handeln. Lauter Wahn! In allen diesen Fällen ist im Grunde das, was uns bewegt ein *Etwas*, das von alle dem *nichts weiß*"; F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn,* 2nd edn. (Breslau, 1789), p. 29, as quoted in KGA, Vol. 1/1:528. Schleiermacher emphasizes the word "weiß," whereas Jacobi's text emphasizes "glauben."

[4] "[D]as Spinozistische Verhältniß des Noumens zu den Phänomenen mit dem Kantischen fast zusammenschmilzt"; KGA, Vol. 1/1:526.

descriptive level, these two figures should be understood as similar – even though, at an evaluative level, Jacobi's ultimate goal is to criticize and leave behind both figures whereas Schleiermacher's aim, on the whole, is to defend and appropriate both.[5]

In contrast to these kinds of uniform interpretation and reaction, it is also possible to offer a *mixed* position here, one that, from the beginning, emphasizes distinguishing these figures, descriptively as well as evaluatively. In his original and highly influential *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, Reinhold, for example, severely criticizes Spinoza as a pantheist, atheist, and fatalist,[6] and *mocks* any comparison of Spinoza and Kant as "half-witted,"[7] whereas he praises Kant for his libertarian theism, as well as the view that "the something thought of as a spirit is for us an unknown something = x"[8] – an obvious reference to the *Critique*'s famous phrase, "the I or he or it (the thing) which thinks … = X."[9] Conversely, there are other readers, such as Hegel, who *criticize* Kant's theory of the self in comparison with Spinoza's on the ground that Kant remains all too mysteriously and dogmatically committed to finite individuals with in-itself properties that we cannot theoretically determine.

Schleiermacher shares the *spirit* of this kind of Hegelian criticism insofar as he says that Kant's system is in part marked by an "inconsistent remnant of the old dogmatism."[10] That is, Schleiermacher realizes full well that Kant remains attached to the traditional view (shared even by

[5] They each also add counterbalancing points about Spinoza and Kant. For example, Jacobi praises Kant and Spinoza for forcing a choice between determinism and libertarianism, whereas Schleiermacher criticizes Spinoza as well as Kant for still being too dogmatic in claiming to know about God's attributes. See KGA, Vol. 1/1:574.

[6] See K. L. Reinhold, *Letters on the Kantian Philosophy*, ed. K. Ameriks, trans. J. Hebbeler (Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 21. This English volume is the only edition that presents the original 1786–1787 journal version in a complete and unified form, and its Appendix contains all the longer additions in the 1790 book edition.

[7] Reinhold uses the epithet, "Halbdenker." Reinhold, *Letters*, p. 60; and K. L. Reinhold, *Briefe über die Kantische Philosophie: Erster Band,* ed. M. Bondeli, in *Karl Leonhard Reinhold Gesammelte Schriften*, Vol. 11, Part 1 (Basel: Schwab, 2007), p. 133. Kant seconds Reinhold on this point by adding in the *Critique*'s second edition Preface (1787), Bxxxiv: "critique alone can cut off at the root *materialism*, *fatalism*, *atheism*, *free-thinking disbelief*, *fanaticism*, and *superstition*." In other places, such as Kant's "Notes on Metaphysics" (1790–1791), Reflection 6317, in AA 18:628, there occurs a similar list of opponents: "skepticism, idealism, Spinozism, materialism, predeterminism."

[8] Reinhold, *Letters*, p. 82. This passage, "jenes als Geist gedachtes Etwas für uns ein unbekanntes Etwas = x ist," is only in the original journal version. It does not appear in the excellent new German critical edition, which presents the revised and much longer book edition (Reinhold, *Briefe*).

[9] KrV, A346. This passage is retained in KrV, B404.

[10] "[I]nkonsequenten Rest des alten Dogmatismus"; KGA, Vol. 1/1:570. Cf. R. Brandt, *The Philosophy of Schleiermacher* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1941), p. 37.

Bayle and Hume in their rejection of Spinozism, which may also have influenced Kant[11]) that, whatever our individual finite selves are, they should *not* be understood as modes of the attributes of God as an all-inclusive substance. It is striking that Kant's anti-Spinozist attachment to independent finite selves is regarded by Schleiermacher as a lapse that is not merely unfounded but is even "*inconsistent*" with what is best in the Critical system. In coming to this conclusion Schleiermacher still regards himself as an *advocate* of transcendental idealism in what he takes to be its proper and "higher" sense.[12] That is, he believes that, given Kant's own idealist conclusion that all the finite items of our experience *cannot* exist on their own but require some underlying ground, a proper Kantian should remain at least open to a monistic conception of that ground.

One reason why Schleiermacher may have believed such an interpretative path to be worth pursuing is that he, like everyone else in the immediate aftermath of the *Critique*, was affected by *Reinhold*'s early account of Kant, and thus he was receptive to Reinhold's repeated – and unfortunate – likening of the distinction between appearances and things in themselves to the fundamental distinction between form and matter.[13] Once such a comparison is accepted, the way is cleared for thinking of the grounding relation between appearances and things in themselves as *in general* something like the ontologically internal relation that consists in an incidental, or subjective, "form" attaching to the underlying substance or "matter" of a being that is not separate from it, rather than sometimes like the ontologically external relation that can consist in a pure (that is, non-spatiotemporal) causal, or "real grounding," relation between a thing and effects distinct from it.

Even though Schleiermacher realizes that, as soon as one interprets Critical idealism in any way that is open to monism and leaves room for *unknown* grounds of particular actions, this can have complications for understanding our own self and its efficacy, he rejects Jacobi's radical interpretation of these complications. He takes Jacobi, in the passage

[11] See Michael Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (London: Routledge, 2008), pp. 279f. Cf. KGA, Vol. 1/1:533.

[12] See, e.g., KGA, Vol. 1/1:557, "zu Vernunftsbegriffen erhoben." My hypothesis here is that Schleiermacher's thought that Kant must be consistently concerned with "reason," in an ambitious sense, is more significant than his inclination to accept Jacobi's influential but questionable claim that any use of the category of causation to refer to something beyond experience is inconsistent with transcendental idealism.

[13] At *ibid.*, Vol. 1/1:527, Schleiermacher refers to Reinhold's basic concept of the *Vorstellungsvermögen* (faculty of representation). Reinhold's stress on form and matter, as distinguishing different drives within the fundamental faculty of representation, had a questionable influence on the efforts of Schiller and others to understand Kant. See K. Ameriks, *Kant and the Fate of Autonomy* (Cambridge University Press, 2000), Chapter 2.

cited above concerning "sheer illusion," to be suggesting that positing a hidden ground for the self is tantamount to implying that it lacks any actual efficacy. To this claim, Schleiermacher immediately responds:

> Now this is the key point where I believe that Jacobi may *not* have understood Spinoza … for I do not understand why a thinking faculty [i.e., our individual thoughts] cannot belong also among the causes that are effective … The infinite thing brings about finite things only insofar as they belong to eternal existence … How can he [Jacobi] say that the inventor of a watch has not invented a watch?[14]

Schleiermacher's response has merit insofar as opponents of Spinoza's necessitarian monism sometimes do make the mistake of speaking as if this strong version of determinism must destroy our *agency* altogether – that is, our simply having effects at all, whether or not we are the free or sole or ultimate source of these effects – and especially insofar as Jacobi in particular tends to speak dramatically about Spinoza's determinism as a kind of "nihilism" that would turn finite individuals into nothing. Nevertheless, in responding to the specific comment about "sheer illusion" that Jacobi makes, Schleiermacher is a bit too quick, because that comment could be read as speaking about what it is that "*ultimately* moves us" and brings about the effects in our life. That is, Jacobi might stress that even if Spinozism can say that there are events in us, such as thoughts about a watch, that are *actual* and proximate causes of various events, it is still committed to insisting there is something beyond our finite states that is the ultimate originating cause of the effect, and that even has a determining power that is absolutely necessary. Spinozism can thus still be charged with teaching that we have been caught in "sheer illusion" here to the extent that we have believed otherwise on this particular point – that is, just about our being *original* causes – even if this does not mean that our activity is "illusion" altogether, and thus that no human being has ever invented a watch. On this point – the opposition to necessitarian monism – Jacobi is actually much closer to Kant than Schleiermacher is, even if Jacobi himself may have failed to appreciate this fact.[15]

[14] "Hier ist nun der eigentliche Punkt, wo ich glaube, daß Jakobi den Spinoza nicht mag verstanden haben … ich begreife nicht warum das denkende Vermögen nicht auch unter die wirkenden Ursachen gehören kann … Das Unendliche Ding bringt die endlichen Dinge … hervor … nur in so fern sie alle zum ewigen unwandelbaren Daseyn gehören … Wie kann er [Jakobi] sagen, der Erfinder der Uhr habe die Uhr nicht erfunden?" (KGA, Vol. 1/1:528, 529)

[15] It is generally recognized that (despite all the grief it caused Mendelssohn), in the essay, "What Does It Mean to Orient Oneself in Thinking?" (1786; in *Religion and Rational Theology*, ed. and trans. A. Wood and G. di Giovanni [Cambridge University Press, 1996], pp. 7–17), Kant

Schleiermacher does not pursue the issue about causality further here, for he himself remains undisturbed even by necessitarian monism as long as it is not combined with *extra* ideas that we are literally powerless or constantly coerced. What is most significant at this point is the fact that, despite all his evident differences with Kant, Schleiermacher still wants to go on to explore ways in which a "consistent" development of Kant's philosophy might pull it *within* a broadly Spinozist orbit after all.

It is here that the main issue becomes not freedom but the question of whether, free or unfree, the self is more than a mere *accident*. The more than merely accidental nature of our finite *thinking* is the main point that Kant emphasizes in his initial published response to the linking of his philosophy to Spinozism. In his 1786 essay on "Thinking" Kant declares,

> It is hard to comprehend how the scholars just mentioned could find support for Spinozism in the *Critique of Pure Reason* … Spinozism speaks of thoughts which themselves think, and thus of an accident that simultaneously exists for itself as a subject, a concept that is not to be found in the human understanding and cannot be found in it.[16]

Since Kant, in this highly significant context, singles out precisely the status of subjectivity as his *fundamental* point of difference with Spinoza's system, it is all the more remarkable that Schleiermacher still believes that even on this topic a bridge can be built between transcendental idealism and Spinoza's monism. This belief is largely based on Schleiermacher's unusually perceptive reading of Kant's Paralogisms, but before that reading can be analyzed in the third section of this chapter, some other aspects of Kant's view need to be clarified in the second.

fundamentally agrees with Mendelssohn against Jacobi insofar as he stresses that his *Critique* is intended to vindicate reason – albeit pure practical reason – as opposed to "mere" faith (against Jacobi explicitly; see KrV, Bxln., "bloß auf *Glauben*"). It is also true, however, that Kant takes himself to be arguing here against Spinoza (at least as interpreted by Jacobi), for he states that the Critical philosophy must reject the claim that "the Spinozist concept of God is the *only* one in agreement with all the principles of *reason*" (Kant, "Thinking," in AA 8:143, my emphasis). In a letter to Jacobi on August 30, 1789, Kant even praises him for having "thoroughly defeated the syncretism of Spinozism and the deism of Herder's *God*" (Kant, *Correspondence*, in AA 11:76). This means that Kant wants above all to criticize those who might lend any support to the suggestion that Spinoza's philosophy leaves room for genuine moral purposiveness. Here Kant also eloquently counters Jacobi's turn from reason to faith by advising him to learn to "sail" another way to theology (AA 11:76): that is, not to pass over the crucial possibility of a pure moral *Vernunftglaube* (rational faith). In a theoretical context, it is Spinoza's view that Kant regards as arch-dogmatist: "the *Critique* completely clips dogmatism's wings," yet "Spinozism is so dogmatic" that it claims "insight" (i.e., theoretical knowledge) into "the impossibility" of a metaphysical object (the theist's God), whereas Critical philosophy simply contends that we *lack* insight into its real possibility (Kant, "Thinking," in AA 8:143n.).

[16] Kant, "Thinking," in AA 8:143n.

A SECOND LOOK AT KANT'S RESPONSE TO SPINOZA

Kant's quick 1786 rebuff to any positive connection between his system and Spinozism might be easy to accept as decisive if only it were immediately clear what his own *alternative* is to what he takes to be the absurdity of "thoughts which themselves think." At first sight, Kant's goal may appear to be simply to contrast the odd idea of "self-thinking" thoughts, which, it might seem, could exist as subjects on their own, to our actual states of thinking, which cannot exist on their own but must be accidents of some substance, namely, an "I or he or it (the thing)." That is, rather than saying there are thoughts that "themselves think," we should say there is some *substance* that, as subject, thinks.

Granting this point, however, still would not be enough by itself to *demonstrate* any absurdity in Spinozism. *Unlike* Hume, Spinoza hardly means to encourage any metaphysics without substance, let alone an ontology consisting of thoughts, in the sense of thinkings (or any other finite items) that might each exist all by themselves. Moreover, it is clear that Kant is aware from quite early on of the Spinozist strategy of trying to show that, if any substance thinks thoughts, it *must* be God. Against this strategy, and in a move that elsewhere I have labeled the "restraint argument," the early Kant insists that we should not in fact believe that acts such as finite thinkings should be regarded as involving *only* truths about God.[17] Instead, Kant claims we can, do, and should believe that, even with all the power that God might have, He is 'restrained' by the need to allow things to have some properties on their own. These properties are already there in the essences of things and are 'prior' to any particular divine actions, so that, however God may act on these things and be involved in bringing about their actual thinking or other accidents, it can be said that there is something *in them* that allows these things to receive this action.

Only in this way, Kant notes (many years later), is there a point in our saying that these things are taking on certain properties, rather than that God is simply coming to take on new properties *within* Himself:

[17] See K. Ameriks, *Interpreting Kant's Critiques* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2003), p. 125; and Kant, "Metaphysik Herder" (1762–1764), in AA 28:52, translation in I. Kant, *Lectures on Metaphysics*, ed. and trans. K. Ameriks and S. Naragon (Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 15. This is from a period in which Kant himself had only recently moved away from a version of determinism. I take it that Kant would still hold to this argument even if it were granted that God exists and determines every fact about human subjects.

One could possibly say about Spinozism that if all the powers and capacities of a substance created and preserved by God are merely divine actions, if we cannot conceive any other than these, then one cannot see how the subject of them is to be posited outside God. By contrast, however, if we perceive an effect in us and a countereffect in other things, it is in turn not to be understood how we could be *accidentia*, which can never be subjects of action and passion.[18]

Note that on this occasion Kant's point is expressed in general terms that go beyond the specific spontaneous nature of thought, however that spontaneity is understood, for it would apply also to what is *passive* in us, such as our particular form of sensibility. Hence, he also says, "The human being … is merely the appearance of a divine creation. His condition of acting *and being acted on* is an appearance and depends on him as bodies depend on space."[19] This "restraint argument" appears crucial to Kant's overall metaphysics, but unfortunately it is never filled out in detail, and it is not easy to see how it can be taken to be decisive in a *neutral* argumentative context. In particular, it is not clear how it could be expected to convince others who hold, as Spinozists do, that God is never to be "restrained," given their *alternative* thought that, if God is to be God, then He must include all reality, and hence even "our" being and its thoughts. In Spinoza's *Ethics* there is a passage bearing directly on this point: "When we say that the human mind perceives this or that, we are saying nothing but that God, not insofar as He is infinite, but insofar as He is explained through the nature of the human mind, or insofar as he constitutes the essence of the human mind, *has* this or that idea."[20] Although Kant does not cite this passage, it certainly appears that he is familiar with its conclusion, for the claim that

[18] Kant, Reflection 6275, in AA 18:542; translated in I. Kant, "Bemerkungen Kants in seinen Handexemplar von Eberhards Vorbereitung zur natürlichen Theologie" (1785–1788), in *Notes and Fragments,* ed. P. Guyer, trans. C. Bowman, P. Guyer, and F. Rauscher (Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 343–355 (p. 349).

[19] Kant, Reflection 6057 (1778–1779), in AA 18:440, translated in Guyer, Bowman, and Rauscher, *Notes and Fragments*, p. 329 (my emphasis). The passage begins by observing,

> God has not given human beings independence from himself (God) but from the incentives of sensibility … their actions are appearances … space is nothing in itself and is not a thing as a divine work but rather lies in us and can only obtain in us. Likewise with the agreeable and its distinction from the good. The appearances are not actually creations, thus neither is the human being (AA 18:439–440).

> The significance of the "Notes" is confirmed by the similarity of this passage to one in KpV (1788), in AA 5:102.

[20] Spinoza, *Ethics* (1677), E2p11c, as quoted in Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, p. 105; and cited in S. Nadler, *Spinoza's Heresy: Immortality and the Jewish Mind* (Oxford University Press, 2001), p. 130.

God would "have" our ideas is what he mentions in *many* other places as his major problem with Spinozism.[21] Note, however, that to stress *this* point is to concede that the main difficulty with Spinozism is not, after all, that it would turn finite thinkings into either absurdly free-floating entities or self-sustaining accidents (i.e., accidents that are themselves subjects), but is instead that it would ('unrestrainedly') make them into accidents within God (as substance) rather than effects within us as separate substances.

It must also be conceded that the way in which Spinoza regards these accidents (namely, the states of finite thinking) as inhering in God needs to be understood more precisely in view of the *key* phrase "insofar as." Although the *Ethics* passage concludes that God "has this or that idea," it does not ascribe these thinkings, or "ideas," to God as such "insofar as He is infinite" but rather simply to Him "insofar as He is explained through the nature of the human mind," that is, *insofar* as we are speaking only of what is an effect and mere part of the *ens realissimum*.[22] Given this distinction, the Spinozist can stress that the situation is not one in which God has taken away our thoughts, as if it is simply He *rather* than we who have them. The thinkings remain actual as finite modes, and we remain actual with them as finite items that are *not* turned into "sheer illusion" – just as the human inventor of a watch can remain the inventor of a watch even if its inventing is predetermined.[23] What is not maintained by the Spinozist, however, is the extra claim that some of these effects can themselves be treated as substances (rather than as especially organized collections of modes), and in such a way that the accidents of thinking should be attached *only* to finite things.

While Kant does allow that there is also some kind of grounding relation *between* substances and their accidents, and not merely a part/whole or inherence relation, he insists that this immanent grounding is not the same as the kind of non-immanent grounding that occurs when

[21] See, for example (on Spinoza's "egoism" and "enthusiasm," i.e., dogmatic monism), Kant, "Metaphysik Herder," in AA 28:207; Reflection 6051 (1776–1779), in AA 18:438; I. Kant, "Vorreden zu Vorlesungen über die philosophische Religionslehre" (1782–1783), in AA 28:1052.

[22] Kant seems to appreciate this point when speaking later of how, for Spinoza, God is not a sum but a unity from which things "emanate," in such a way that the situation of being an effect and being a mode (accident) coincide: "Spinozism, however, held that this totality of things is underlain by a unity in God, and that things would be accidents emanating from this unity of substance and the workings of the deity … fatalism"; I. Kant, "Metaphysik der Sitten Vigilantius" (1793), in AA 27:719, translated in Kant, *Lectures on Ethics*, p. 442; see also below, n. 24.

[23] See above, n. 14. Although in this context our being as a mode is not an illusion, its ontological independence does turn out to be illusory.

one substance effects another substance really distinct from it.[24] At this point the debate can *appear* to have arrived at an impasse. Spinozists will insist that the notion of substance is to be defined in such a way that it can apply only to completely independent beings, whereas Kant and others like him will insist that substantiality and absolutely independent existence should not be connected in this way by *definition*. Kant repeatedly emphasizes this matter of definition,[25] but this approach threatens to reduce the philosophical issue to a merely verbal dispute, and makes it again extremely difficult to *evaluate* from a perspective that might be generally persuasive to those who are not already committed to a particular side. There is, however, *another* strand to Kant's discussion of the self – namely, the paralogistic considerations appreciated in detail only by Schleiermacher – and this strand may lead to a more fruitful comparison with Spinoza's position.

SCHLEIERMACHER'S PARALOGISM INTERPRETATION AND A THIRD LOOK AT KANT'S RESPONSE TO SPINOZA

One natural way to try to make progress here is to recall the obvious fact that the most *direct* way for Kant to ground his resistance to Spinozism regarding the self's substantiality would be if he could rely on a Cartesian or Leibnizian argument proving that the events of our finite thinking entail that we must be the substances to which alone thoughts should be ascribed as accidents. But here there is also another relevant, puzzling, and equally obvious fact – and one that Kant himself remarkably does not draw attention to whenever he is discussing any connection between his views and Spinoza – namely, that the *Critique* itself appears aimed, in the very first of its Paralogisms, directly at *attacking*, rather than defending, arguments for our substantiality from the mere phenomenon of having thoughts. Despite the obviousness of these facts, this Paralogism has been

[24] See I. Kant, "On a Discovery whereby Any New Critique of Pure Reason Is to Be Made Superfluous by an Earlier One" (1790), in AA 8:225n., where, after chiding Spinoza for converting dependence into inherence, Kant remarks, "In addition to its relation as substance to accidents (and their inherence), a substance certainly also has the relation to them of cause to effects, but the former is not identical to the latter." Spinoza appears to want to allow only one kind of grounding relation, so that the situations of inhering in something and being a logical or causal effect of it all become the same. This view seems to bring odd consequences with it; for example, "it would seem that the chair inheres in or is a state of the carpenter" (Della Rocca, *Spinoza*, p. 69).

[25] See, e.g., I. Kant, "Metaphysik L2" (1790–1791?), in AA 28:563; Reflection 6275, in AA 18:542; I. Kant, "Philosophische Religionslehre nach Pölitz," (1783–1784), in AA 28:1041.

repeatedly overlooked or misunderstood.[26] Very few interpreters have even noted its direct bearing on the issue of the connection between Spinoza and Kant's Critical position,[27] and even Schleiermacher does not directly emphasize this *particular* argument.

What Schleiermacher focuses on is Kant's critical discussion of the *third* paralogism (the term is not capitalized here because it refers to the specific fallacious argument under discussion, rather than the full corresponding section of Kant's critical text), which concerns personal identity over time. It is the first paralogism argument, however, that appears most fundamental here, for it is the one that argues specifically for the self's substantiality. Fortunately, Schleiermacher's detailed remarks (most likely motivated by his overriding interest in the phenomenon of "flux") on the third Paralogism can be easily *extended* to apply to the basic issue of the first Paralogism as well, even though they hardly exhaust all that needs to be said about Kant's extremely complex attitude toward the topic of our substantiality.

Schleiermacher's discussion here is provoked by Jacobi's claim that Spinoza's position – and the Kantian position as well (once it is accepted that there is at least a deep analogy between the derivative nature of finite modes in the *Ethics* and the derivative nature of space and time in the *Critique*) – can lead one to the point where "[I] doubt my own objective personality (and that is the *actual* identity of my subject)."[28] Schleiermacher puts the issue very vividly, drawing on considerations from the third Paralogism: "The question is whether a purely [i.e., merely] apparent person is possible. Jacobi admits the Kantian assertion that I can doubt whether my consciousness is continuous, more than he himself affirms it."[29] What this means is that, once a "person" is defined (as Kant proposes here) as a thoroughly continuous consciousness over time, then even if subjectively one seems to be aware of oneself as the same thing at many different moments, there is still no way to prove, either empirically or non-empirically, that this is truly, or "*objectively*," the case for

[26] See K. Ameriks, *Kant's Theory of Mind*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2000), Chapter 2.

[27] An exception, noted by Mariña (*Transformation*, p. 96n.) and Paul Franks (*All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005], pp. 95–96), can be found in a review by H. A. Pistorius, "Erläuterungen über des Herrn Professor Kant 'Critik der reinen Vernunft' von Joh. Schulze," *Allgemeine deutsche Bibliothek* 66/1 (1786), 92–123.

[28] "[Ich] an meiner eignen Objektiven Personalität (das ist der *wirklichen* Identität meines Subjekts) zweifle." Jacobi, *Über die Lehre*, p. 337, quoted in KGA, Vol. 1/1:538.

[29] "Es fragt sich nun ob die bloß scheinbare Person möglich ist? Jakobi giebt das der Kantischen Behauptung daß ich zweifeln könne ob mein Bewußtseyn nicht fließend sei, mehr zu, als daß er es selbst behauptet." KGA, Vol. 1/1:539; translation from Mariña, *Transformation*, p. 80.

those moments, let alone that there are no significant gaps between the moments that are considered.

One can, of course, *redefine* "personal identity" to be something that holds simply throughout whatever psychological path does seem sufficiently continuous to oneself subjectively, but this is just to change the subject of the classical rationalist topic. Kant, Jacobi, and Schleiermacher all take it for granted that we understand and accept a *distinction* between the identity that we truly and "objectively" have, and the identity that appears to each one of us alone, subjectively. They all also seem to accept that once such a distinction is made, there is no certain philosophical *argument* to close the gap between the subjective and the objective. Insofar as rational psychology claims to be an a priori science, it cannot possibly succeed here, and it is equally unclear how on mere empirical grounds one could ever claim Cartesian certainty about particular moments of identity.

Note, however, that any concern simply about certainty with regard to temporal facts is a far cry from what appears to be at issue in the dramatic worry about whether one is a *merely* "apparent person." The deeper worry in that case is not about whether one is a "person" in the technical sense of a being that is a priori certain of its identity over *time*. The ultimate issue (which Schleiermacher alludes to as the second half of the "double doubt" that can arise here[30]) is whether at any moment one is really a person *at all* in some substantive sense, as opposed to merely seeming to be such. This worry leads back to the *first* Paralogism question of whether finite subjects, simply as items with any kind of thoughts, must themselves be substances at all. As Kant sets up the discussion, it is only after the rational psychologist already accepts some positive response to this first question that there arise worries about the specific *additional* complexities of the second and third Paralogisms – namely, whether the unity of having a complex thought at one time shows that there is one and the same substance underlying each part of such a thought, and whether the apparent continuity of having a series of thoughts throughout time shows that one is one and the same substance underlying that series.[31]

[30] See KGA, Vol. 1/1:541; and Mariña, *Transformation*, p. 74, citing M. Frank, "Einleitung," in F. Schleiermacher, *Dialectic*, ed. Frank (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 2001), p. 92.

[31] As Colin Marshall has reminded me (and as is noted, e.g., in Ameriks, *Kant's Theory*, p. 64), there are ways in which the issues of simplicity and identity might be broached independently of the notion of substance. But the "doctrine" that Kant is discussing is characterized as starting with the notion of a soul's substance. See KrV, A344/B402.

There is an understandable temptation to tie all of these worries closely to Kant's doctrine of *transcendental* idealism, for that doctrine does imply a deep and general distinction between the way that appearances are characterized and the way that things in themselves are characterized. Hence, one point that Schleiermacher and other interpreters[32] stress here is the fact that a Kantian cannot consistently insist that we *know* exactly how to map phenomena and noumena onto each other. Nonetheless, even if it is conceded that on many readings of transcendental idealism there are serious difficulties in determining any mapping relation involving noumena, it should be kept in mind that difficulties like the kind that Schleiermacher raises here are, in a sense, relevant for philosophy *in general*. They could also be raised, for example, in contemporary ontological disputes about how to map commonsense terms (especially, but not only, of a psychological nature) onto the mysterious ultimate micro-entities of the latest physics. It is not evident, therefore, that transcendental idealism by itself leads to a *severe special* problem for Kant here. The doctrine can rather serve as a reminder of his fortunate Critical insight that we can learn not to insist on strong claims to *determinate knowledge* that go beyond the sphere of both our ordinary and 'Newtonian' experience. In his reply to Eberhard – who was Schleiermacher's main philosophy teacher – Kant takes it to be precisely an *advantage* of his idealism that it reminds us not to presume any access to an exact mapping here: "It is a completely erroneous view of the theory of sensible objects as mere appearances, which must be underlain by something nonsensible, if we imagine or try to get others to imagine, that what is meant thereby is that the super-sensible substrate of matter will be divided according to monads just *as* I divide matter."[33] The difficulty in determining a 'mapping' can therefore be taken as not so much an objection to Kant's own view but rather a consideration that he himself wants to emphasize precisely in order to prevent the dogmatic and *non-transcendental*-idealist conclusion that our grasp of appearances, as accessible sensible parts of space and time, gives us a sure grasp of the 'true joints' that distinguish things in themselves in general. This point by itself, however, does not have to lead to any deep *worry*; it can simply require us to be modest in whatever we say about what is not in any way described in terms of our sensibility. Even if we do not know exactly what noumenal stuff our subjectivity maps onto, as long as it is conceded that here there exists "*Something*" or

[32] See KGA, Vol. 1/1:48; and Mariña, *Transformation*, p. 50.
[33] Kant, "Discovery," in AA 8:209n. This passage is discussed in Ameriks, *Kant's Critiques*, p. 83.

other in itself, one need not be said to be literally "doubting" whether one is a substance at all.

This point is appreciated by Schleiermacher himself when he remarks at one point that Jacobi goes too far in implying that a Kantian must literally have *doubt* about being a person. Schleiermacher properly observes that, to be more precise, it is simply a "lack of *knowledge*"[34] that is relevant here, where "knowledge" (*Wissen*) is understood in a strong sense that requires nothing less than theoretical certainty. Schleiermacher also makes clear that he takes Kant himself to hold to the "belief" (*Glaube*) that in fact we are persons,[35] and so, in the end, for Kant our situation is not to be characterized in terms of "sheer illusion" or as a matter of holding our status as persons to be *dubious* rather than merely dubitable in a speculative philosophical sense.

At the same time, however, Schleiermacher insists that he sees absolutely no "positive ground" for Kant's holding, as he always does, to a *plurality* of substances in themselves: "Kantians do not have a positive ground for introducing a plurality of substances."[36] I take this to mean that, for Schleiermacher at this time, Kant's recourse to "belief" in this case seems as ad hoc and unacceptable as Jacobi's notorious kind of unregulated appeal to "faith," an appeal that Reinhold[37] and then Kant himself sternly resist. Nonetheless, Kantians can counter that the thought that we are distinct from other substances is not an ad hoc matter of "faith," in the sense of the typical controversial ideological or theological doctrines that Jacobi was concerned with, but is more like a genuinely common *default* position of all ordinary subjects, one that can be allowed to be innocent until proven guilty.

In conclusion: the early Schleiermacher ultimately remains closer to Spinoza than to Kant because Schleiermacher lacks what the Critical philosophy takes to be a matter of ordinary, rational, and *sufficient belief* – that is, an epistemic attitude that provides an adequate form of acceptance for the thought that we are independent persons, even if, technically speaking, it may not be called knowledge. (This can be a striking conclusion for those who think of Schleiermacher primarily in terms of his many later works on *Glaube*.) At the very least, this shows once more how

[34] "[V]ielmehr Unwissenheit," KGA, Vol. 1/1:541.

[35] *Ibid*.

[36] "[E]inen positiven Grund für die Mehrheit der Substanzen an sich dürft ihr [Kantianer] – gar nicht anführen"; *ibid*., Vol. 1/1:549.

[37] Reinhold, *Letters*, pp. 25–26, mocks the several meanings of "faith" in Jacobi. Kant picks up this theme in his second Preface to KrV, Bxln.

Spinoza's philosophy had a remarkable effect on German thought, in that it *challenged* all idealists to reconsider exactly how much autonomy they were willing to reserve for finite selves as such, and how far they might be willing to go in responding to the radical thought that we are never original causes or even independently existing subjects.

CHAPTER 4

Herder and Spinoza

Michael N. Forster

As is well known, a great flowering of Spinozism occurred in German philosophy in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[1] Lessing, Herder, and Goethe; the German Romantics Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schlegel, and Novalis; the German Idealists Schelling and Hegel – all of them subscribed to one or another version of Spinoza's monistic, deterministic metaphysics.

What was the source of this great flowering? Much of the credit for it has tended to go to Jacobi and Mendelssohn, who in 1785 began a famous public dispute concerning the question of whether or not Lessing had been a Spinozist, as Jacobi alleged Lessing had admitted to him shortly before his death in 1781. But Jacobi and Mendelssohn were both negatively disposed toward Spinoza. In *On the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn* (1785), Jacobi, a champion of Christian fideism, represented Spinoza's philosophy as the very epitome of all that was most wrong with philosophy's reliance on reason. According to Jacobi, Spinoza's philosophy revealed even more clearly than other cases that such a reliance inevitably led to atheism and fatalism. Admittedly, Mendelssohn had indeed, in an early work, his *Philosophical Conversations* (1755), tried to salvage Spinoza's reputation to some extent by representing

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[1] This chapter cites Spinoza's *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* from the following edition: B. de Spinoza, *A Theologico-Political Treatise; A Political Treatise*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1951), hereafter *Tractatus*. The chapter cites Spinoza's *Ethics* from B. de Spinoza, *On the Improvement of the Understanding; The Ethics; The Correspondence*, trans. R. H. M. Elwes (New York: Dover, 1955).

Spinoza's philosophy as a significant, albeit inadequate, precursor of the true Leibnizian–Wolffian philosophy. But by the time Mendelssohn wrote his more famous and influential replies to Jacobi, the *Morgenstunden* (1785) and *To Lessing's Friends* (1786), he too was basically hostile toward Spinoza's philosophy, essentially agreeing with Jacobi's charge that it implied atheism and fatalism (albeit while also making room for a "purified" version of it that would avoid such vices, i.e., a version that radically revised it in the spirit of Leibniz and Wolff).[2] So, prima facie at least, it seems rather unlikely that Jacobi and Mendelssohn can deserve much of the credit for the massive wave of positive appropriations of Spinoza's philosophy that I recently mentioned.

That wave's more likely main source surely lies in its own earliest representatives, Lessing, Herder, and Goethe, who, in sharp contrast to Jacobi and Mendelssohn, were all great *enthusiasts* for Spinoza's philosophy.[3] But once this fact is recognized, it is only a short further step toward realizing that the central figure here must have been *Herder*. For Lessing's alleged late private confession of Spinozism, despite its undeniable éclat when Jacobi revealed it, was ambiguous and philosophically undeveloped – in sharp contrast to Herder's statement of Spinozism in *God: Some Conversations*.[4] And Goethe's first enthusiasm for Spinoza, which probably dates back to an engagement with the *Tractatus Theologico-Politicus* in Strassburg in 1771,[5] and then continued in a better-known intensive engagement with the *Ethics* in 1773/1774,[6] was in all likelihood inspired by Herder, whom he first met in a life-changing encounter in Strassburg in 1771 at a time when Herder was already deeply interested in the *Tractatus*,[7] and who was likewise already taking a deep interest in the *Ethics* and its monistic metaphysics in 1773/1774.[8] (Accordingly, Goethe

[2] For a helpful treatment of the Jacobi–Mendelssohn controversy and of the two philosophers' attitudes toward Spinoza, see F. Beiser, *The Fate of Reason* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1987).

[3] See H. Lindner, *Das Problem des Spinozismus im Schaffen Goethes und Herders* (Weimar: Arion Verlag, 1960), pp. 150, 176.

[4] The ambiguity and lack of development in Lessing's position have since been somewhat reduced by relevant manuscripts of his dating from the early 1760s onward, but these were not published until the end of the eighteenth century and so had no public influence at the time (see M. Bollacher, *Der junge Goethe und Spinoza* [Tübingen: Max Niemeyer, 1969], pp. 194ff.).

[5] See *ibid*., pp. 50ff.

[6] See *ibid*., p. 88; also Lindner, *Das Problem des Spinozismus*, pp. 73ff.

[7] See Bollacher, *Der junge Goethe*, esp. pp. 149, 160; Lindner, *Das Problem des Spinozismus*, p. 72. At this time Herder was himself heavily occupied with the main topic of the *Tractatus*, namely interpretation of the Old Testament, and as we shall see later in this article, he was already strongly influenced by the *Tractatus*.

[8] For example, in "Shakespeare" (1773) Herder remarks on how Shakespeare's mind made the whole world into its body and all the world's characters and manners of thought into its traits, "and the

would later continue to follow Herder's lead as an interpreter of Spinoza when they reread Spinoza together in Weimar in the early 1780s,[9] and he would enthusiastically endorse Herder's interpretation of Spinoza in his *God: Some Conversations* of 1787.[10]) In short, Herder was the central figure here.

David Bell, in his illuminating book *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe*, arrives at a similar conclusion (albeit via a somewhat different route). Herder's *God: Some Conversations* from 1787, with its defense of a revised form of Spinoza's metaphysical-religious monism and determinism, obviously played a central role in generating the great wave of Spinozism that followed, and accordingly receives close attention from Bell. But, as Bell shows (following earlier German scholarship by Vollrath and Lindner),[11] Herder's interest in Spinoza also extends much further back in time than that work: at least as far back as 1768/1769, when he began to take an interest in the metaphysical doctrines of Spinoza's *Ethics* (albeit an initially crude and then for a time predominantly critical interest).[12] I agree with Bell about all this.

However, whereas Bell goes on to argue that Spinoza's earliest *positive* influence on Herder did not occur until the mid 1770s and that it then lay mainly in the area of Spinoza's ethical values, which according to Bell the early Herder found largely consonant with Christian values (the last part of this is certainly true, but a little boring!),[13] I want to suggest that it

whole can be called that giant God of Spinoza, 'Pan! Universe'" (HG 2:515); in 1774 Herder touts Spinoza's *Ethics* to his employer, Duke F. E. W. zu Schaumburg-Lippe, and gives him a copy (J. G. Herder, *Johann Gottfried Herder Briefe* [Weimar: Hermann Böhlaus Nachfolger, 1977], Vol. III, p. 140); and in early 1775, Herder explicitly preaches a form of Spinozistic monism in a letter to Gleim (Herder, *Briefe*, Vol. III, p. 151).

[9] See D. Bell, *Spinoza in Germany from 1670 to the Age of Goethe* (London: Institute of Germanic Studies, University of London, 1984), p. 97.

[10] See Lindner, *Das Problem des Spinozismus*, p. 172.

[11] W. Vollrath, *Die Auseinandersetzung Herders mit Spinoza* (Darmstadt: C. F. Winter, 1911), pp. 11–19; Lindner, *Das Problem des Spinozismus*, esp. pp. 68–69.

[12] Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, pp. 41ff. As Bell points out, Herder's references to the metaphysics of the *Ethics* in 1768 are still crude, as yet showing little understanding of it (they occur in a review of some poetry by Giseke in which Herder praises the latter's crude poetic representation of Spinoza's God as a sort of giant person [HS 4:276]), but in 1769 they become a lot more accurate, presumably reflecting a serious reading of the work (see especially Herder's essay "Grundsätze der Philosophie" [1769]). (After-echoes of the cruder interpretation can still be found in 1770 at HS 8:154, and even in the essay "Shakespeare" from 1773, though.)

[13] Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, pp. 55ff.; cf. Bollacher, *Der junge Goethe*, pp. 70, 144–145. Bell's interpretation mainly focuses on two explicit remarks that Herder makes in his *Erläuterungen zum Neuen Testament* (1775) about Spinoza and his fundamental moral agreement with Christianity (HS 7:374, 462). As Bell says, there are good grounds for Herder's perception of such a moral agreement, including Spinoza's disapproval of hatred, anger, contempt, and envy, and his approval instead of love, helpfulness to neighbors, and generosity (even in return for the former);

already began as early as 1768/1769, and that it included in addition three more important and interesting areas of strong influence: first, a certain hermeneutics (i.e., methodology of interpretation), especially biblical hermeneutics;[14] second, the political ideals of democracy and liberalism; and third, a distinctive faculty-unifying, anti-dualistic and -idealistic, and deterministic – or in short naturalistic – philosophy of mind. I also want to suggest that Herder had already taken over Spinoza's metaphysical-religious monism as early as 1773–1775 (around the same time as he took over the philosophy of mind just mentioned). Indeed, I hope to show that these positive influences exercised by Spinoza on the young Herder constituted a sort of incremental sequence that over time incorporated increasingly fundamental levels of Spinoza's thought: beginning with hermeneutics in the late 1760s, proceeding thence to political philosophy in the early 1770s, then culminating with the philosophy of mind and metaphysical-religious monism around the mid 1770s.

In what follows I shall bracket the relatively dull part of this whole story that Bell has already told, namely Herder's early discovery and endorsement of quasi-Christian ethical values in Spinoza.[15] But I shall try to say something about each of the further steps of appropriation just mentioned.

HERDER AND THE *TRACTATUS*

It is a fundamental part of my account here that Spinoza's *Tractatus* had a major positive impact on Herder's thought before Spinoza's *Ethics* did – Herder drawing on the former work for central principles of (biblical) interpretation and politics before he became seriously committed to versions of the latter work's philosophy of mind and metaphysics. This is a rather novel and controversial thesis. So I would like to begin by making a few preliminary observations in its support.

A first point to note here is that it would be very surprising if the young Herder, as an omnivorously well-read Lutheran clergyman obsessively concerned with questions of biblical, and especially Old Testament,

moreover, even some of the Christian moral values that Spinoza officially rejects, in particular humility and repentance, nonetheless receive *qualified* approval from him (pity is another matter, though). A further point of moral agreement between Spinoza and Christianity that Bell omits to mention but that must have been important for Herder is their shared moral cosmopolitanism, or moral concern for all human beings as such.

[14] Cf. Bollacher, *Der junge Goethe*, pp. 140–142, 165–166. Bollacher anticipates this first part of my interpretation to a certain extent, but not the next two parts.

[15] See for this Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, pp. 55ff.

interpretation, had somehow managed to overlook the *Tractatus*, given that the work was seminally important for those questions, and had been a stock fixture of disputations on biblical hermeneutics in the Lutheran world since the 1670s.[16] Moreover, it is very easy to see why, even if he was indeed reading and borrowing from the work, the young Herder would have maintained a virtual silence about it: namely, because in eighteenth-century Germany it was widely regarded as a very witch's cauldron of atheism and political radicalism,[17] and was therefore not a work that he could afford to associate himself with.

But, fortunately, we do not need to rest content with such circumstantial evidence in support of the thesis that the young Herder read and was influenced by the *Tractatus*. For there is also a body of more direct evidence that at exactly the same time as he was beginning to take an interest in Spinoza's *Ethics* in the way that Bell has already demonstrated, namely 1768/1769,[18] he was also reading and falling under the influence of the *Tractatus*. For example, in a letter to Hamann from April of 1768 Herder repeats two of Spinoza's main principles from the *Tractatus* concerning biblical interpretation – a denial that the Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament) was authored by Moses,[19] and a rejection of allegorical interpretations of the Old Testament – and then goes on to add the following revealing comment about his own approach to the Old Testament: "I read orientally, Jewishly, anciently, poetically; not northernly, Christianly, modernly, and philosophically."[20] A little later, in August of 1768, Herder wrote to Nicolai asking him to obtain manuscripts by Edelmann – the most notorious Spinozist in eighteenth-century Germany, and in particular a follower of the radical principles of biblical interpretation, as well as the radical politics, of the *Tractatus*. In doing so Herder claimed that he was asking for the manuscripts on behalf of an

[16] Concerning the work's role in the Lutheran world since the 1670s, see J. Israel, *Radical Enlightenment: Philosophy and the Making of Modernity 1650–1750* (Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 216–217.

[17] See *ibid*., Chapter 34.

[18] Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, pp. 41ff.

[19] It is true that Herder fails to follow Spinoza in attributing the Pentateuch to Ezra. Indeed, in a short piece on the Old Testament from 1769, *Ueber Moses*, Herder explicitly distances himself from such a position, saying that the Pentateuch is not by Ezra, or at least was not *written* by him (HS 32:204). However, note that this piece thereby also confirms the impression that Herder was thinking about and engaging with the *Tractatus* at the relevant period (as, indeed even more explicitly, does a citation of the *Tractatus* in Herder's contemporaneous *Fragments for an Archaeology of the East* [1769], to be discussed shortly below).

[20] Herder, *Briefe*, Vol. 1, pp. 97–98. It should be noted here that Herder often associates Spinoza with the Orient (see, e.g., HG 4:718–720).

unnamed scholar/neighbor. But this was surely just a subterfuge, and one that moreover eloquently reveals Herder's sense of the danger involved in becoming associated with Spinoza's work and its adherents.[21] Finally, in an essay from 1769 on the interpretation of the Old Testament, *Fragments for an Archaeology of the East*, Herder explicitly cites the *Tractatus* at one point (specifically, in support of a certain interpretation of the Old Testament expression "sons of God"), thereby cautiously showing his knowledge of and respect for the work.[22]

Some additional historical points are relevant here as well: shortly after his first surge of interest not only in the *Ethics* but also in the *Tractatus* in 1768/1769, Herder, in January–February of 1770, visited Spinoza's native country, Holland, including Spinoza's home town, Amsterdam, with a view to working there on an essay concerned with political philosophy.[23] It seems reasonable to suspect that this visit was in part motivated by an interest in Spinoza generally and in the political side of the *Tractatus* in particular. Moreover, be that as it may, the visit must surely have brought the work's democratic and liberal ideals to Herder's attention even more forcefully than before, both in the specific form of actual Spinozistic political literature and ideas circulating in Holland, and in the more generic form of the country's republican-liberal political practice. Somewhat later in 1770, Herder went to stay in Strassburg, where on a famous, fateful September day he met and befriended the young Goethe at an inn named "Zum Geist"(!). While they were both living in the city, Herder continued his *Tractatus*-influenced studies on the Old Testament,[24] and Goethe wrote a *Tractatus*-influenced dissertation concerning the relation between church and state[25] – in all likelihood under Herder's influence.[26]

Much later, in the early 1780s, Herder would write a summary of the *Tractatus*.[27] And later still, in his *God: Some Conversations* of 1787, he would – revealingly, I suggest – begin his positive appropriation of

[21] Herder, *Briefe*, Vol. 1, p. 106. Cf. Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, p. 41. As Bell notes, Herder at his death possessed no fewer than five of Edelmann's works.
[22] HS 6:109. Cf. Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, p. 43.
[23] R. Haym, *Herder nach seinem Leben und seinen Werken* (Berlin: Gaertner, 1880), Vol. 1, pp. 355–356.
[24] *Ibid*., Vol. 1, p. 401.
[25] See Bollacher, *Der junge Goethe*, pp. 50ff. Unfortunately, this dissertation is now lost.
[26] See Lindner, *Das Problem des Spinozismus*, p. 72; Bollacher, *Der junge Goethe*, pp. 149, 160. The hypothesis that it was Herder who first made Goethe interested in Spinoza at this early period is Lindner's rather than Bollacher's.
[27] See HS 14:699 n. 3. Cf. Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, p. 97.

Spinoza's philosophy by paying cautious tribute to both the biblical hermeneutics and the political principles of the *Tractatus*.[28]

In short, there is pretty strong prima facie evidence not only that Herder began to take an interest in Spinoza's *Ethics* in 1768/1769, but also that he read and fell under the influence of Spinoza's *Tractatus* at that time, especially in connection with biblical interpretation and political philosophy.

HERMENEUTICS

At just that period Herder was himself heavily occupied with interpreting the Bible, especially the Old Testament, and with the methodology of biblical interpretation. This can be seen from several of his works, including: *On the Divinity and Use of the Bible* (1768), *On the First Documents of the Human Race* (1768/1769), and *Fragments for an Archaeology of the East*. He was also occupied with the methodology of interpretation more generally – as can be seen especially from *On Thomas Abbt's Writings* (1768).

We have already noted some general evidence that Herder was reading, and drawing on, the *Tractatus* in this connection. In particular, recall his repetition of two of the work's central principles concerning the interpretation of the Old Testament in a letter to Hamann from 1768, together with his general remark there, "I read orientally, Jewishly, anciently, poetically"; his search in 1768 for manuscripts by Edelmann, Germany's most notorious enthusiast for the *Tractatus* and its approach to interpreting the Bible; and his explicit citation of the *Tractatus* in the *Fragments for an Archaeology*.

But beyond that, a detailed comparison of the *Tractatus* with Herder's own texts from the period reveals such a striking and thorough agreement between their interpretive principles that it seems fairly clear that the *Tractatus* was indeed exercising a strong, or perhaps even a decisive, influence on Herder's interpretive methodology at the time. The following are some of the specific points of agreement:

(1) In Chapter 7 of the *Tractatus* Spinoza had rejected two common methods of interpreting the Bible: on the one hand, relying on divine inspiration; on the other hand, reading the Bible as allegory (or metaphor) in order to find a rational meaning in it.[29] Herder likewise

[28] HG 4:685–686. (The year 1787 was also when the *Tractatus* appeared in a German translation for the first time.)

[29] *Tractatus*, pp. 114–118, 180.

criticizes and rejects these two methods, for example in *On the First Documents*.[30]

(2) Spinoza had also in the *Tractatus* firmly rejected any reliance on *authority* when interpreting the Bible (as in Catholicism, for example).[31] Herder likewise implies such a rejection in all of his writings on the Bible from the relevant period (as well as later).[32]

(3) Spinoza had in the *Tractatus* instead advocated a method of interpreting the Bible in which the interpreter's inferences from relevant evidence to the author's intentions would be similar to the natural scientist's inferences from relevant evidence to definitions or axioms.[33] Herder explicitly advocates just the same sort of assimilation of the method of interpretation to that of natural science in *On Thomas Abbt's Writings*.[34] Moreover, in works from the relevant period he applies such an approach to interpreting the Bible in particular.[35]

(4) In the *Tractatus* Spinoza had maintained that "words gain their meaning solely from their usage,"[36] so that a primary task of the interpreter of ancient texts is to determine what the relevant word-usages were.[37] Herder from an early period holds exactly the same view.[38]

(5) Spinoza had also in the *Tractatus* emphasized the importance when interpreting an ancient text such as the Bible of paying close attention to its distinctive historical context (including the distinctive condition of the language then in use).[39] Herder does just the same in works from the relevant period.[40]

(6) Spinoza had also in the *Tractatus* emphasized the importance in interpretation of paying close heed to the distinctive character of an author's *mind*.[41] Herder likewise makes this a central principle of the general methodology of interpretation that he sketches in *On Thomas Abbt's Writings*.[42] It also persists as one of the most striking and important

[30] For his rejection of a reliance on divine inspiration, see esp. HG 5:27–30 (cf. HG 9/1:35); for his rejection of rationalizing allegorical readings, see esp. HG 5:92–3 (cf. HS 6:74ff.).

[31] *Tractatus*, pp. 118–119. [32] See, e.g., HS 6:33–38; HG 9/1:73, 80–83.

[33] *Tractatus*, p. 99. [34] See esp. HG 2:571–572.

[35] For example, in *Fragments for an Archaeology* and *On the First Documents* he explains the Old Testament account of God's resting on the seventh day of the Creation in terms of the ancient Hebrews' wish to rationalize the human practice of taking a day of rest (HS 6:58–63; HG 5:32–34). Another good example is his explanation of the story of the tower of Babel in *On the First Documents* (HG 5:163–165).

[36] *Tractatus*, p. 167. [37] *Ibid.*, p. 101.

[38] See, e.g., already the *Fragments on Recent German Literature* (1766–1767), HG 1:322, 421–423; then later *On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782), HG 5:1007.

[39] *Tractatus*, p. 101. [40] See, e.g., HG 9/1:30–31; HS 6:4, 34–35.

[41] *Tractatus*, pp. 103, 111–112.

[42] HG 2:575–576, 604–608. Cf. HG 9/1:33–35; HS 6:34.

features of his methodology of interpretation in later works, such as *On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul* (1778).

(7) Spinoza had insisted in the *Tractatus* on the importance of sharply separating the question of the *meaning* of biblical texts from the question of their *truth*.[43] Accordingly, he was prepared to attribute false views to the prophets on many matters,[44] and even to find numerous contradictions within the Bible (both within the Old Testament and within the New).[45] The early Herder's approach to interpreting the Bible is strikingly similar: he too insists on distinguishing questions of meaning from questions of truth,[46] attributes many false beliefs to biblical authors,[47] and even ascribes contradictions to them.[48]

(8) Spinoza had, though, in the *Tractatus*, also drawn a sharp distinction between the *moral* doctrines of the Bible (doctrines that pertain to salvation and blessedness) – which he considered to be true, clear, and the sole proof of the Bible's divine origin – and the Bible's *theoretical* conceptions – which, on the contrary, he considered unreliable and unclear.[49] Herder in early works such as *On the Divinity and Use of the Bible* draws just the same distinction.[50]

(9) Spinoza had in the *Tractatus* explained the false beliefs and even contradictions that occur among the prophets' theoretical convictions in terms of God's having chosen to adapt revelation to the low level of understanding that they and their audience possessed.[51] Herder in his early writings on the Bible gives exactly the same explanation.[52]

[43] *Tractatus*, pp. 101, 106, 170–171. [44] *Ibid.*, pp. 35ff.

[45] *Ibid.*, pp. 39–40, 106, 153, 163, 193–194.

[46] See, e.g., HG 2:579–580. (This passage, from *On Thomas Abbt's Writings*, concerns interpretation generally, but is of course therefore also meant to apply to biblical interpretation in particular.)

[47] See, e.g., HG 9/1:23–24; and esp. HS 6:32–33, 76.

[48] In his early writings Herder largely leaves this last point implicit; it is implied, for example, by his general claims there that the biblical authors often have false beliefs, that the Bible is a haphazard collection of texts authored by different human authors at different periods, and so on. Occasionally he comes close to making the point explicitly as well: "confused injunctions" (HG 9/1:24); representations that "contradict all our physics … and all its probability and certainty and consistency" (HS 6:33). In his later writings, he makes the point more explicitly. For example, he observes in *On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782) that Hebrew conceptions in the Old Testament concerning the mind–body relationship, death, and an afterlife changed dramatically over time, and he also notes inconsistencies in the New Testament in the *Christian Writings* (from the 1790s).

[49] *Tractatus*, pp. 100, 113, 194. [50] See, e.g., HG 9/1:36–38.

[51] *Tractatus*, pp. 40, 77, 88–89, 90–92, 163–164, 180, 182, 193.

[52] See, e.g., HG 9/1:25–26, 29; HG 5:28–29, 35–36, 170.

(10) Spinoza had in the *Tractatus* emphasized the *poetic* character of the Old Testament.[53] Herder in his early writings on the Old Testament, such as *On the First Documents* and the *Fragments for an Archaeology*, does the same.[54] This emphasis continued to be a central feature of his approach to the Old Testament in later works as well, such as the revealingly titled *On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782).

(11) A further principle of Spinoza's in the *Tractatus* very closely connected to his biblical hermeneutics was that miracles, in the sense of contraventions of the natural order, are not possible, and that God cannot be known from miracles but only from the natural order.[55] The early Herder holds exactly the same position.[56]

Now, it would certainly be an exaggeration to say that Herder took over all of these principles from Spinoza *exclusively*; other sources, including Christian Bible scholars whom Herder discusses more explicitly (e.g., Lowth, Ernesti, Semler, and Michaelis), must have played important roles as well. For example, principle (2), the rejection of any reliance on authority when interpreting the Bible, was a staple of Protestantism; principle (4), that words gain their meaning solely from their usage so that the interpreter needs to focus on this, had been strongly championed by Ernesti; versions of principles (8) and (9), concerning the Bible's moral (or salvific), rather than theoretical, purpose and its condescension to the cultural level of its human authors and their audience, had already been championed before Spinoza by Galileo; and principle (11), namely rejecting miracles and seeing God as instead revealed in the natural order, was a favorite principle of Herder's own teacher, the pre-critical Kant.

Still, given the independent evidence for Herder's preoccupation with Spinoza's *Tractatus* at the relevant period (as described earlier), the remarkable extent of his agreement with the work's principles of interpretation sketched above surely does show that he was strongly influenced by the work in this area.

Also, one should keep in mind that in addition to *direct* influence by the *Tractatus*, there is also likely to have been *indirect* influence. For some of the other authors who influenced Herder (e.g., the Christian Bible scholars recently mentioned) were probably themselves ultimately indebted to the *Tractatus*.

[53] *Tractatus*, p. 92. [54] See esp. HG 5:26–27, 34ff.; HS 6:3ff., 29ff.

[55] *Tractatus*, p. 82.

[56] See, e.g., *Treatise on the Origin of Language* (1772), where he applies this position to the question of whether language is a divine miracle or has a natural explanation (HG 1:808–809).

POLITICAL PHILOSOPHY

When one reads through Herder's writings of the period from 1768 to 1774, one notices that his political thought undergoes a remarkable shift at this time.[57] In his sermons from the late 1760s, and the *Journal* that he wrote in 1769 upon leaving Riga to travel to France, he is still basically a champion of the sort of enlightened absolutism that Catherine the Great was exercising in Russia at the time,[58] and he seems by contrast quite ambivalent about republicanism.[59] However, by the time he comes to write four poetic works in the years 1770–1773 – "Charlemagne" (1770), "Eagle and Worm" (1771), the first draft of the poetic drama *Brutus* (1772), and "Origin, Condition, Purpose, and History of Monarchy" (1773)[60] – his political stance has reversed itself. For in these works (including even the earliest of them from 1770), he now conveys a strongly anti-monarchical, leveling, freedom-loving political message. By the time he publishes *This Too a Philosophy of History for the Formation of Humanity* (1774) this reversal of political stance becomes more official and public: he now presents himself as a harsh critic of modern monarchy,[61] and by contrast an enthusiast for democratic republicanism and freedom.[62] He subsequently continues to champion this political position ever henceforth, for example in the *Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Humanity* (1784–1791).

In addition, at about the same time as his own political position changed, Herder began to ascribe his new political ideals to the early ancient Hebrews. Thus in *On the First Documents* (1768/1769) he says that originally, beginning with Moses, they had a theocratic "republic."[63] And in the later, published version of the same work, the *Oldest Document of the Human Race*, which appeared contemporaneously with *This Too a Philosophy of History* in 1774, he argues more elaborately that they had originally practiced republicanism and freedom.[64]

[57] See F. Beiser, *Enlightenment, Revolution, and Romanticism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), Chapter 8.

[58] See among the sermons especially the sermon from 1768 at HS 31:43ff. See in the *Journal* esp. HS 4:354–356, 371, 404–405, 420–421, 431–432, 467–468, 473–474.

[59] See esp. *ibid*. 4:409–410, 467.

[60] *Ibid*. 28:11–27; 29:35–39, 335–337, 400–401.

[61] See esp. HG 4:72–74, 93; cf. 15–16, 22–23.

[62] See esp. *ibid*. 4:25–28, where he praises ancient Greek versions of these ideals (though at pp. 97–100, 103–104 he is more critical of their modern counterparts). Note that in 1774 Herder also published the final version of his anti-tyrannical, republican-spirited poetic drama *Brutus* (HS 28:52ff.).

[63] HG 5:39; cf. 126.

[64] *Ibid*. 5:650–651.

How is this sudden reversal in Herder's political philosophy to be explained? He was certainly exposed to various early influences that might have made him sympathetic to his new political ideal. One was his teacher Kant's commitment to republicanism and liberty. Another was his own positive experience of the limited form of republicanism and liberty that he had found practiced in Riga while living there in 1764–1769, as contrasted with his subsequent negative experience of the oppressive absolutism that he found practiced in Bückeburg when he moved there in 1771. However, these influences do not seem sufficient to explain his switch to his new political stance. For one thing, the timings are not quite right: when he made his switch, Kant's strongest influence on him already lay several years in the past; his latest writings in Riga show him still championing enlightened absolutism; and he changed his political position *before* arriving in Bückeburg (as the poem "Charlemagne" from 1770 shows). For another thing, the influences just mentioned fail to account for the democratic, leveling tenor of his new political position (neither Kant nor Riga could by any stretch of the imagination be described as champions of democracy). For yet another thing, these influences fail to account for Herder's adoption of the ancient Hebrews as a model of his new political ideal.

So wherein lies the proximate explanation? Part of it probably lies in Herder's focus on classical Greece during the period in question in connection with his writing of an early draft of his main treatise on sculpture, *Plastic* (draft 1770; published version 1778). For, of course, classical Athens was the very model of democratic republicanism and liberty. Accordingly, Herder in the early draft of the *Plastic* from 1770 writes with enthusiasm of "Greek freedom."[65]

But I want to suggest that another part of the proximate explanation probably lies in the influence of Spinoza's *Tractatus*. For among the most striking positions that Spinoza puts forward in the *Tractatus* is a strong defense of both democracy and liberty (especially liberty of thought and speech).[66] Moreover, Spinoza had also made a case in the work that a political constitution of just this sort had already been practiced by the ancient Hebrews during Moses' lifetime and for a period after his death (before eventually giving way to virtual monarchy).[67] Given that, as we have already seen, Herder began to fall under the influence of the

[65] HS 8:131, 136. Cf. his similar enthusiasm for Greek democratic republicanism and liberty a few years later in *This Too a Philosophy of History* (1774; HG 4:25–28).

[66] *Tractatus*, esp. pp. 205–207, 241, 258–264.

[67] *Ibid.*, esp. pp. 220–221.

Tractatus during the period 1768/1769, the work fits perfectly as one of the decisive factors behind his change of political position, not only in terms of these contents but also in terms of the timing.

I would also suggest that Herder's visit to Holland in early 1770 with a view to working on a political essay while there was probably in part motivated by an interest in the relevant political ideals of the *Tractatus*, and that it will have both deepened his acquaintance with them and reinforced their appeal for him by exposing him to the vibrant republican-liberal practice of Holland.

PHILOSOPHY OF MIND

Let us now turn to the aspects and phases of Herder's development that were influenced by Spinoza's *Ethics* (rather than by his *Tractatus*).

It is important to note here at the outset that what Herder found attractive in Spinoza's *Ethics* were more its conclusions than its arguments. For from an early period of his career Herder had been very skeptical about the value of a-priori arguments in philosophy. Accordingly, one already finds evidence of Herder's skepticism about Spinoza's apriorism as early as 1769.[68] And in both of Herder's works that are most important for the issues we are about to consider, *On the Cognition and Sensation of the Human Soul* (1778) and *God: Some Conversations* (1787), he self-consciously rejects Spinoza's apriorist approach in favor of one that takes prominently into account what Herder sees as advances in empirical science. Herder is especially clear about this change of method in *God: Some Conversations*, where in particular he explicitly rejects the apriorism of Spinoza's geometrical method, and instead champions an updating of Spinoza's theory in the light of current empirical science.[69] But Herder is already engaged in such a revision of Spinoza's method in *On the Cognition and Sensation*, where, for example, he strives to reach Spinozist conclusions via Haller's recent empirical theory of "irritation" (*Reiz*). (More on this anon.)

That qualification noted, let us now consider how Spinoza's theories in the *Ethics* influenced Herder's own thought. It seems to me that they decisively influenced both his metaphysical-religious position and his position in the philosophy of mind, and that they did so at around the same time in each case: the mid 1770s.

[68] See on this Vollrath, *Die Auseinandersetzung*, pp. 18–19.

[69] See esp. HG 4:698, 708, 717. For this reason (among others) David Bell's criticisms of Herder for seriously misrepresenting Spinoza's views in *God: Some Conversations* are rather beside the point. Herder's purpose there is not straight interpretation but rather philosophical *reconstruction*.

As David Bell has shown, Herder had already begun to take an interest in the metaphysical-religious monism that Spinoza had propounded in the *Ethics* as early as 1768/1769, though initially a rather uninformed, and then a rather critical, interest.[70] However, there is compelling evidence that by the period from 1773 to 1775 Herder had become a true devotee of the *Ethics*, and in particular of its metaphysical-religious monism. For example, in his essay "Shakespeare" (1773) he observes approvingly that Shakespeare's mind made the whole world into its body and all the world's characters and manners of thought into its traits, "and the whole can be called that giant God of Spinoza, 'Pan! Universe.'"[71] Then in 1774 he takes the bold step of touting Spinoza's *Ethics* to his employer in Bückeburg, the ruler of the principality, Duke F. E. W. zu Schaumburg-Lippe, and giving him a copy.[72] Finally (and most importantly of all), in a letter to the poet Gleim from January of 1775 he urges him to substitute into one of his poems the (Spinoza-spirited) phrase "All in all!" or something similar, and then goes on to say:

> An idea from which our West is quite distant, and which Gleim could express so uniquely: that heaven is everywhere, that space and time disappear before God, but that He can only live where there is thought, and where there is the purest thought, effective love! That this is God, God in every point or rather in no point. It is, as it acts, in eternity, raised above space and time, embraces everything, flows together with everything that thinks and loves, and so accomplishes all the works that occur in the world, is God! – These ideas sound fanatical, but are the coldest, most factual metaphysics (read Spinoza, the *Ethics*).[73]

In short, Herder had already become an enthusiastic follower of Spinoza's *Ethics*, and in particular its central principle of metaphysical-religious monism, by the mid 1770s (a full decade before the famous *Pantheismusstreit* between Jacobi and Mendelssohn).

In terms of Herder's *public* philosophical development, however, it was actually Spinoza's *philosophy of mind* in the *Ethics* rather than this metaphysical-religious principle that first impacted his writings. So let us consider the impact of Spinoza's philosophy of mind first.

Shortly after his more general conversion to Spinozism in 1773–1775, as just described, Herder published *On the Cognition and Sensation of the*

[70] Bell, *Spinoza in Germany*, pp. 41ff. [71] HG 2:515.

[72] Herder, *Briefe*, 3:140. Similarly, in March of 1774 Zimmermann thanks Herder for sending him the "Dutch Plato," which is almost certainly an allusion to Spinoza's work, and incidentally one that again reveals the prevailing sense of danger in becoming associated with Spinoza (cf. Lindner, *Das Problem des Spinozismus*, p. 68).

[73] Herder, *Briefe*, 3:151.

Human Soul (1778), a work in which he developed a very distinctive philosophy of mind. This philosophy of mind was clearly influenced by more than one predecessor (including, for example, Leibniz and Haller). But by no one more strongly than Spinoza. Let me focus on some of the work's key doctrines in order to illustrate this fact.

The work actually exists in three drafts: a first from 1774; a second from 1775; and the third, published draft from 1778. One central doctrine of the work – already present in the earliest draft from 1774 – is that cognition and volition are at bottom one (Herder also says the same about cognition and sensation). In another work from 1774, *To Preachers: Fifteen Provincial Letters*, Herder expresses the same doctrine in terms of a unity of "understanding and will."[74] Now this doctrine almost certainly already represents a debt to Spinoza.[75] For Spinoza had written in the *Ethics* in a strikingly similar vein that "will and understanding are one and the same."[76]

But Spinoza's influence on Herder's work becomes even more striking in the final draft from 1778, where several further doctrines reflect it as well. To begin with the most important of them. During the 1760s and the early 1770s Herder had usually espoused a fairly conventional philosophy of mind: dualistic,[77] or sometimes idealistically reductive of the body to the mind à la Leibniz;[78] and libertarian[79] – in a word, anti-naturalistic. Indeed, he occasionally still implies such a position even as late as 1775: "[The soul] is a queen and not a slave: it has a place outside the world in itself, and it moves the whole world."[80] By contrast, in the published version of *On the Cognition and Sensation* from 1778 he espouses a position that is anti-dualistic, insistent that the body is at least as ontologically fundamental as the mind, and deterministic – in a word, naturalistic. I want to suggest that this whole shift was largely a result of the influence of Spinoza's *Ethics*. Let us consider each of its two parts (the physicalism and the determinism) in turn.

In the published version of *On the Cognition and Sensation* from 1778 Herder sharply rejects dualism and any idealistic reduction of the body to the mind in favor of a sort of mind–body identity theory that accords the body an ontological status at least as fundamental as that of the mind:

[74] HG 9/1:99–100.
[75] Cf. Bollacher, *Der junge Goethe*, p. 147.
[76] E2p49c. It may also be worth noting that the first draft of *On the Cognition and Sensation* from 1774 contains reflections on the limitations of self-knowledge (HG 4:1093) that are reminiscent of similar reflections in the *Ethics*.
[77] See, e.g., HS 4:364; 31:213.
[78] See, e.g., HG 4:236, HS 8:151–152.
[79] See, e.g., HG 1:716–717.
[80] HS 8:295.

he says that "bodies … are perhaps not in nature separated from the soul (*psychê*) by such strong walls as the rooms of our metaphysics separate them [*sic*]," and he insists that "no *psychology* is possible that is not in every step a determinate *physiology*."[81] But Spinoza had already argued very similarly in the *Ethics* that "mind and body … are one and the same individual conceived now under the attribute of thought, now under the attribute of extension."[82]

To be more exact about the nature of Spinoza's influence on Herder here, this seems in fact to have been a two-phase process. First, although, as I recently mentioned, Herder during the 1760s and early 1770s *usually* implies either dualism or an idealistic reduction of the body to the mind à la Leibniz, there is one striking exception to the rule. This is a passage from *On the First Documents* (1768/1769) in which he champions an anti-dualistic, physicalistic interpretation of the Old Testament's conception of the spirit, and moreover himself endorses such a conception.[83] He concludes the passage in question with the following summation: in contrast to later positions that have perversely divorced the spirit from the body and imagined salvation as lying in the separation of the former from the latter,

> the Mosaic document remains more faithful to the sensuous, simple truth: the human being is a life-endowed animal of the earth; he enjoys the earth; he uses the life that God gave him; he is, in his earthly, life-endowed existence, and in an innocent manner, happy within the bounds of nature. In no way, moreover, let him destroy his essence, since this was one of God's purposes; let him not wish to free himself from his body and seek fantastic forms of blessedness in becoming a pure spirit, since God has so-to-speak embodied him entirely. He created the human being, the dust, from earth, and merely wafted into this dust a weak breath of life. That is the human being.[84]

Now it seems virtually certain that the interpretation of the Old Testament's conception of spirit that Herder is offering and philosophically endorsing here is taken directly from Spinoza's *Tractatus*. For Herder bases it on the following more specific reading of the Old Testament's position that he gives a little earlier in the same passage: "Is the human being dust alone, though? – No! the earthen creature blows[/breathes] [*haucht*], breathes [*atmet*], lives."[85] But in the *Tractatus* Spinoza had given precisely the same analysis of the Old Testament concept of *ruagh*, or spirit: "We

[81] HG 4:338, 340. [82] E2p21s; cf. E3p2s, E5p1d.
[83] HG 5:69–72. [84] *Ibid*. 5:72.
[85] *Ibid*. 5:69.

must determine the exact signification of the Hebrew word *ruagh*, commonly translated spirit. The word *ruagh* literally means wind, e.g., the south wind, but it is frequently employed in other derivative significations. It is used as equivalent to (1) Breath … (2) Life, or breathing."[86]

Second, concerning the period of *On the Cognition and Sensation* itself: Herder already envisaged *some* sort of intimate union between mind and body in the first draft from 1774. But at that time his idea was still basically that it consisted in a reduction of bodies to minds, or monads, à la Leibniz.[87] However, in the second draft from 1775 he added a partly critical but partly positive explicit discussion of Spinoza. In the course of this discussion he noted Spinoza's distinction between God's two known attributes, thought and extension (or as Herder calls the latter, "motion"), and made his well-known accusation that Spinoza had failed to unite these (an accusation he later repeated in *God: Some Conversations*), but also (less famously, and here most importantly) hinted that Spinoza had nonetheless somehow *aspired* to unite them, specifically in a way that did not involve a reduction in either direction: "Both are properties of one being, which Spinoza forgot *or despaired* to bring closer together since he had removed them so far from himself."[88] Herder's own quasi-physiological account of the mind in the second and third drafts of *On the Cognition and Sensation* in terms of Haller's phenomenon of "irritation" (*Reiz*) can therefore be seen as an attempt on Herder's part to realize *Spinoza's goal of establishing an identity of mind and body that does not simply reduce one of them to the other*. For Herder usually conceives of "irritation" (a phenomenon paradigmatically exemplified by muscle fibers contracting in response to the application of a physical stimulus but then relaxing upon its removal) as a phenomenon that combines physical with primitive mental traits.[89]

Concerning next Herder's switch from libertarianism to determinism, in the published version of *On the Cognition and Sensation* from 1778 he strikingly rejects libertarianism in favor of a determinism of the individual

[86] *Tractatus*, p. 19.

[87] See, e.g., HG 4:1094. Cf. HG 4:236; HS 8:151–152, 300.

[88] HS 8:266; my emphasis. Cf. later HG 4:707, 709.

[89] I actually think that Herder's recently quoted passage from 1768/1769 concerning the Old Testament's conception of spirit and certain passages in the second and third drafts of *On the Cognition and Sensation*, suggest the even more radical position of a sort of reduction of mind to body. And in other work I have emphasized this more radical strand in his thought because of its intrinsic philosophical value (see, e.g., M. N. Forster, *After Herder: Philosophy of Language in the German Tradition* [Oxford University Press, 2010], p. 28). Here, however, I shall set it aside in order to focus on his more official position, as described above.

human being: "One is a serf of mechanism … and imagines oneself free; a slave in chains and dreams that they are wreaths of flowers … Here it is truly the first germ of freedom to feel that one is not free and what bonds hold one."[90] But now, Spinoza had argued very similarly in the *Ethics* that "men are mistaken in thinking themselves free; their opinion is made up of consciousness of their own actions, and ignorance of the causes by which they are conditioned."[91]

Moreover, in this case Herder makes his debt to Spinoza quite clear, for immediately after the passage quoted above in which he says that freedom is an illusion based on the reality of a sort of slavery, and hints that recognizing this fact constitutes the first step toward a truer sort of freedom ("it is truly the first germ of freedom to feel that one is not free"), he goes on to develop a more specific version of such a line of thought that Spinoza had already articulated in the *Ethics*, and to attribute it to Spinoza explicitly:

> Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. The deeper, purer, and more divine our cognition is, the purer, more divine, and more universal is our efficacy, and so the freer our freedom … We stand on higher ground, and with each thing on *its* ground, roam in the great sensorium of God's creation, the flame of all thinking and feeling, *love*. This is the highest reason, and the purest, most divine volition. If we do not wish to believe the holy St. John about this, then we may believe the undoubtedly still more divine *Spinoza*, whose philosophy and ethics revolve entirely around this axle.[92]

Finally, as can again be seen from this passage, Herder's philosophy of mind in *On the Cognition and Sensation* owes an additional intellectual debt to Spinoza's *Ethics* as well (albeit one that is likely to strike philosophers today as much less attractive than the others discussed above): namely, in connection with his own doctrine that there is an ultimate unity of cognition and love. This is, of course, a version of Spinoza's famous doctrine, from near the end of the *Ethics*, of an *amor dei intellectualis*.[93]

In short, several of the most central and interesting doctrines in the philosophy of mind that Herder espouses in *On the Cognition and Sensation* from 1778 are largely due to Spinoza's influence.

[90] HG 4:362. [91] E2p35s.
[92] HG 4:363. Cf. Herder's later explicit commitment to Spinoza's determinism in *God: Some Conversations* (HG 4:734, 741–742, 766–767, 786–787).
[93] E5p32–37. Cf. Bollacher, *Der junge Goethe*, pp. 147–148.

METAPHYSICAL-RELIGIOUS MONISM AND GLOBAL DETERMINISM

Herder's next and final *public* step in his progressive appropriation of Spinoza's philosophy concerns the even more philosophically fundamental level of *metaphysics and religion*, especially the doctrines of metaphysical-religious monism and global (i.e., unrestricted) determinism. This step is far better known than the preceding steps, at least in general outline. So my discussion of it here can be somewhat briefer than would otherwise be warranted.

As we have noted, Herder had already begun to show an interest in this side of Spinoza's thought in 1768/1769, and then espoused it himself in 1773–1775. The passage I recently quoted from *On the Cognition and Sensation* of 1778 might already be interpreted as implying it publicly, but if so then only rather obscurely. Herder's continuing and intensifying sympathy with it is subsequently shown by the fact that he and Goethe began an intensive study of Spinoza's *Ethics* together in the early 1780s. Then in 1784 Herder's Preface to his *Ideas for the Philosophy of History of Humanity* (1784–1791) clearly implies a neo-Spinozistic metaphysical-religious monism,[94] as well as a neo-Spinozistic global determinism.[95] Herder thus already embraced the core of Spinoza's metaphysical-religious position long before the Jacobi–Mendelssohn controversy concerning it exploded in 1785.

That controversy largely just gave Herder the courage to "come out" as a Spinozist (especially, by revealing publicly that the highly respected and much mourned Lessing had also been a Spinozist). Accordingly, in a letter to Gleim from 1786 he roundly declares, "Ich bin ein Spinozist,"[96] and then in 1787 he publishes his most explicit, detailed statement and defense of a neo-Spinozistic monism and determinism, the famous *God: Some Conversations*.

The controversy also prompted Herder to develop and defend his own version of Spinoza's metaphysical-religious position more fully than before, however. Let us therefore consider the form that this development and defense took.

[94] HG 6:17.

[95] *Ibid*. 6:14–15. As the *Ideas* unfolds, Herder adds a Spinozistic renunciation of appeals to final causes in order to explain either nature or history (see, e.g., in the Third Part, published in 1787, HG 6:568–569, 623, 625).

[96] Herder, *Briefe*, 5:172.

As has already been mentioned in passing, Herder published *God: Some Conversations* in the wake of Jacobi's *On the Doctrine of Spinoza in Letters to Mr. Moses Mendelssohn* (1785) and Mendelssohn's replies to it, *Morgenstunden* (1785) and *To Lessing's Friends* (1786). In the *Letters* Jacobi had revealed that the highly respected philosopher, critic, and dramatist Lessing (who was greatly admired by Herder in particular) had confessed to him shortly before his death that he had abandoned orthodox religious conceptions in favor of Spinozism. Jacobi had himself argued in the *Letters*, in a sharply contrary philosophical spirit, that Spinozism, and indeed any fundamental reliance on reason, implies atheism and fatalism, and should therefore be rejected in favor of a leap of faith to a conventional Christian theism. Mendelssohn had then responded by questioning Jacobi's report about Lessing in various ways (Lessing was probably just playing devil's advocate, Lessing was probably just having fun with Jacobi, etc., etc.), and by suggesting that while Jacobi's charge that Spinozism implied atheism and fatalism was basically correct, such a position could be rationally refuted, so that reason itself was innocent, and moreover it could be recast in a "purified" form that avoided the vices in question. Jacobi's work and Mendelssohn's response caused a public furor. In *God: Some Conversations* Herder intervened. There he broadly supports Lessing's side of the debate against Jacobi, and to some extent also Mendelssohn, by defending a version of "Spinozism,"[97] but a version that modifies the original in some significant respects, largely with a view to defusing their objections.

Above all:

(1) Herder champions Spinoza's basic thesis of *monism* and, like Spinoza, equates the single, all-encompassing principle in question with God (which of course immediately challenges the Jacobi–Mendelssohn charge of atheism). But whereas Spinoza had characterized this principle as *substance*, Herder instead characterizes it as *force*, or *primal force*.[98]

This fundamental revision is closely connected with several further ones that Herder makes, including the following:

[97] See esp. HG 4:747–748.

[98] Interestingly enough, this fundamental move is already prefigured in a semi-Spinozist, semi-Leibnizian aphorism of Herder's from 1769, in which he says that all phenomena are "the representation of a collection of very obscurely thinking forces, and at bottom all one! For life-forces, the forces of electricity and motion, the force of gravity must in the end yet be reducible to one [*auf Eines*]" (HS 32:199; cf. HG 4:237).

(2) Spinoza might with some plausibility be accused of having conceived the principle in question as an *inactive thing* (his concept of "substance" and his doctrine that time is somehow merely apparent both suggest this, albeit that other aspects of his position, e.g., his conception of substance as a *causa sui* and as *natura naturans*, tend to contradict it). By contrast, Herder's fundamental revision turns the principle more clearly into an *activity*.

(3) Spinoza's theory had attributed *thought* to the principle in question, but had rejected conceptions that it had *understanding*, *will*, or *intentions*, or was a *mind*. By contrast, Herder claims that it *does* have understanding, will, and intentions.[99] Moreover, given that his general philosophy of mind identifies the mind with force, his fundamental identification of the principle in question as primal force also carries an implication that it *is* a mind (already in his *God: Some Conversations* of 1787 he describes God as "the primal force of all forces, *the soul of all souls*";[100] a few years later in *On the Spirit of Christianity* from 1798 he also characterizes God as a *Geist*, a mind). In these ways, Herder in effect re-mentalizes Spinoza's God (thereby further undermining the Jacobi–Mendelssohn charge of atheism).

(4) Whereas Spinoza had conceived nature mechanistically, in keeping with his Cartesian intellectual heritage (and had thereby provoked the Jacobi–Mendelssohn charge of fatalism), Herder (though officially agnostic about what force is) rather tends to conceive the forces at work in nature as *living*, or organic (a conception of them that he mainly owes to Leibniz).

(5) Herder believes that Spinoza's original theory contained an objectionable residue of dualism (again inherited from Descartes), in its conception of the relation between God's two known attributes, thought and extension, and similarly in its conception of the relation between *finite* minds and bodies (while also, as we already saw from the second draft of *On the Cognition and Sensation*, recognizing that Spinoza *aspired* to overcome such dualism).[101] By contrast, Herder's own conception of God and His thought as force, and of finite minds and their mental processes as likewise forces, is designed to overcome this alleged residual dualism, since Herder understands forces to be of their very nature expressed in the behavior of extended bodies.[102]

[99] See esp. HG 4:724–728. [100] *Ibid*. 4:710; my emphasis.
[101] For this recognition in *God: Some Conversations* itself, see esp. HG 4:707, 709.
[102] See esp. HG 4:709–10.

(6) Herder also argues that just as Spinoza conceived time to be ultimately only an appearance of God, a sort of image of a God who is really eternal,[103] so he should likewise have considered *space* to be merely an appearance of God, not an outright reality.[104] In this way Herder advocates a version of Spinozism that could be described as a sort of *idealist acosmism*, rather than a sort of pantheism. By doing so he further deflates the Jacobi–Mendelssohn charge that Spinozism is atheism.[105]

(7) Toward the end of *God: Some Conversations* Herder also sketches an account of nature as a system of living forces based in the primal force, God. His account ascribes an important role in this system to the sort of opposition between contrary forces that is paradigmatically exemplified in the magnet. And it characterizes this system as a progressive self-development toward ever higher forms of articulation.[106]

THE FORMATION OF GERMAN ROMANTICISM AND GERMAN IDEALISM

This chapter has focused on four sets of principles that, I have suggested, Herder largely took over from Spinoza in a sort of progressive appropriation of Spinoza's philosophy that began in the late 1760s and then culminated between the mid 1770s and the 1780s: a certain hermeneutics (or methodology of interpretation), especially for the Bible; political ideals of democracy and liberty; a naturalistic philosophy of mind that denied any sharp division between cognition and volition, rejected mind–body dualism and reductions of the body to the mind à la Leibniz in favor of

[103] Spinoza does not classify time as one of God's attributes as he does space/extension. Instead, in Letter 12 he characterizes it, along with measure and number, as "nothing other than … modes of imagining"; implies that the attempt to understand substance, eternity, etc. in such terms is hopeless; and adds that many people "[confuse] these three concepts with reality because of their ignorance of the true nature of reality" (Ep., p. 104).

[104] See esp. HG 4:713. Cf. on this topic J. Zammito, "Herder, Kant, Spinoza und die Ursprünge des deutschen Idealismus," in M. Heinz (ed.), *Herder und die Philosophie des deutschen Idealismus* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 1997), pp. 107–144.

[105] Interestingly enough, Herder already prefigures this whole move in the interpretation he gives of Spinoza in *Grundsätze der Philosophie* from 1769: "Spinoza believed that everything exists in God. He therefore denied all radii, all planets; he only assumed a single center, which he called God and world. One can therefore call him an idealist with as much right as an atheist. The latter he was not" (HS 32:228; cf. HG 4:237). For another, somewhat later anticipation of this move, see Herder's 1775 letter to Gleim, as quoted earlier in this chapter (Herder, *Briefe*, Vol. III, p. 151). Note that there is a deep tension between this move and Herder's Spinozistic philosophy of mind.

[106] See HG 4:778–794.

identifying the mind with the body in a way that allowed the latter to be at least as ontologically fundamental as the former, and championed determinism (together with a more mystical doctrine that the highest cognition is a form of love); and finally, a form of metaphysical-religious monism, together with a closely associated global determinism.

Between them, these principles went on to form the very foundations of both German Romanticism and the later phases of German Idealism – so that Spinozism really lies at the heart of both these great German philosophical movements. This is especially true of the chronologically later, more philosophically fundamental principles in the list, so let us now begin with those and work backward.

Concerning metaphysical-religious monism, as I mentioned earlier, toward the end of the eighteenth century and then well into the early nineteenth century a great wave of neo-Spinozistic metaphysical-religious monism swept through German philosophy: in addition to the three forerunners already discussed in this chapter, namely Lessing, Herder, and Herder's follower Goethe, the founders of German Romanticism, Schleiermacher, Friedrich Schlegel, and Novalis, all adopted it as well, as did the main later representatives of German Idealism, Schelling and Hegel.[107] This was all largely the result of Herder's embrace of neo-Spinozism, especially in *God: Some Conversations*, and largely took over Herder's modifications of Spinoza's position. For example, when Schleiermacher adopted Spinoza's metaphysical-religious monism in the 1790s he incorporated into it Herder's conception of the single principle in question as a primal *force*. Moreover, as I have argued in detail elsewhere, so too did Hegel at first, albeit that he eventually arrived via an immanent critique of such a conception at an even more radical account of the single principle in question (as well as of the *finite* mind) that virtually *identified* it with its manifestations in physical behavior.[108] Hegel also took over Herder's revision of Spinoza's conception of the ontological status of space modeled on Spinoza's conception of the ontological status of time, namely as a mere appearance of an eternal God (idealist acosmism), as his own interpretation of Spinoza. In addition, Hegel took over Herder's re-mentalizing of Spinoza's substance, like Herder reconceiving it as *Geist*, or mind (albeit while making clearer than Herder had done that this was not an interpretation of Spinoza but a revision). To give yet another example, Schelling's philosophy of nature – and in its

[107] The earlier German Idealists, Kant and Fichte, were also influenced by Spinoza's metaphysical position, albeit in less obvious and straightforward ways. See on this Lindner, *Das Problem des Spinozismus*, pp. 176–182.

[108] See my "Ursprung und Wesen des Hegelschen Geistbegriffs," *Hegel-Jahrbuch* (2011), pp. 213–229.

train Hegel's as well – drew much of its inspiration from Herder's sketch of nature toward the end of *God: Some Conversations* as a self-developing hierarchical system of living forces grounded in the primal force, God, and as proceeding via the sort of opposition between forces that is paradigmatically exemplified in the magnet.[109]

A similar picture emerges concerning the closely related Spinoza–Herder doctrine of global determinism: Schleiermacher's version of Spinozism in the 1790s included this feature. So too, somewhat later, did Hegel's mature philosophy, in which not only finite spirits but also Absolute Spirit are conceived as subject to necessity.

Turning to the philosophy of mind, Schleiermacher, beginning in his most emphatically Spinozistic period, the 1790s, but then continuing in his mature lectures on psychology, took over all three of the main Spinoza–Herder naturalistic principles in the philosophy of mind that have been discussed in this chapter to form the core of his own philosophy of mind: the denial of any sharp distinction between cognition and volition; the denial of dualism and Leibnizian reductions of the body to the mind, in favor of a non-reductive mental–physical monism; and the espousal of a form of determinism. The same is true, *mutatis mutandis*, of Hegel.

Concerning the political ideals of democracy and liberty, the continuity from Spinoza and Herder into German Romanticism and German Idealism is less consistent, but still significant. For example, Friedrich Schlegel was both a radical democrat and a liberal during the 1790s (publishing a short essay championing these political principles in 1796). Schleiermacher was sympathetic with both democracy and liberalism in the 1790s as well, and continued to be a liberal throughout the rest of his career. And the young Schelling and Hegel were also strongly attracted to these political ideals.

Finally, concerning Spinoza and Herder's hermeneutics, or methodology of interpretation, the following principles of theirs all went on to become central principles of Schleiermacher's hermeneutics as well: that one must not interpret the Bible on the basis of an assumption of divine inspiration or in an unjustifiably allegorical way or in deference to authority, but instead in the same scrupulously evidence-based manner as any other ancient text; that one must pay close attention when interpreting such texts to their distinctive historical context; that one must keep questions of meaning sharply separate from questions of truth, even when

[109] Concerning this last point, see Lindner, *Das Problem des Spinozismus*, pp. 174–175.

interpreting the Bible; that one must in particular recognize falsehoods and inconsistencies in the Bible when they occur; that meaning is determined by word-usage, so that discovering the relevant word-usages is a central task of interpretation; and that one must also interpret in light of a knowledge of the author's individual psychology. These Spinoza–Herder principles also played an important role in the closely related, though less well-known, early hermeneutic theory of Schleiermacher's friend Friedrich Schlegel. (Their influence on German Idealism was less strong, however.)

THE INTRINSIC VALUE OF THESE PRINCIPLES

The influence that was exercised by all these Spinozistic principles taken over by Herder on the subsequent development of German philosophy is extraordinary. But their intrinsic value is hardly less so.

This intrinsic value should be fairly self-evident and uncontroversial in the cases of the Spinozistic rejection of inspirational, allegorical, and authority-based approaches to interpreting the Bible in favor of a more rigorous approach, as well as the rest of the Spinozistic methodology of interpretation; the Spinozistic championing of democracy and liberty over such contrary political principles as absolute monarchy; and the Spinozistic rejection of faculty-dividing, dualistic or idealistic, and libertarian models of the mind in favor of their naturalistic opposites. (The relatively self-evident intrinsic value of these principles has been part of my reason for focusing on them so heavily in the present chapter.)

But an argument could perhaps even be made for the intrinsic value of Spinozistic metaphysical monism. For such a principle is susceptible to different versions and variants. Spinoza himself identified the single principle in question as God, conceiving it in a way that accorded equal status to the attributes of thought and extension. In doing so, he was closely followed by the early Schelling and the early Hegel with their "philosophy of identity." By contrast, the mature Hegel, while he likewise identified the single principle in question with God, tended to elevate thought (or mind) over extension (or nature) in his reworking of the principle. Then, finally, the tradition of Feuerbach, Marx, and subsequent naturalistic philosophy dropped the identification of the single principle in question with God, and recast it with an opposite inflection to Hegel's, maintaining a priority of the material over the mental, rather than conversely.[110] My own

[110] For a helpful account of Feuerbach and Marx's variants of Spinozism, see Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 2 vols., Vol. II (Princeton University Press, 1989), Chapters 3 and 4.

philosophical intuitions, like those of many recent philosophers, sympathize most with the last of these versions or variants: atheistic materialism. While it would not be correct to say that this was Spinoza's own version of his principle,[111] it does arguably still constitute a descendant and variant of his principle. To this extent at least, his principle could perhaps be said to contain an insight that continues to hold philosophical promise today.

CONCLUDING COMMENT

Like Lessing before him, Herder was committed to a profound cosmopolitanism. Again like Lessing before him, he was thereby enabled to repudiate the anti-Semitism that corrupted so many of his German contemporaries – including his famous teacher Kant (himself officially a "cosmopolitan," but one whose "cosmopolitanism" was more hospitable to some appalling anti-Semitic, racist, and misogynist views than to all people). Beyond that, he was also thereby enabled to sympathize deeply with Judaism as a religious and cultural tradition. Recall in this connection his early remark concerning his own approach to the Old Testament: "I read orientally, Jewishly, anciently, poetically."[112] This cosmopolitan open-mindedness toward Judaism also enabled Lessing and Herder to take seriously, and eventually to embrace, the thought of the greatest Jewish philosopher of the modern period, Spinoza. By doing so, they not only redressed a great cultural injustice, turning Spinoza from being a pariah in Germany into one of the most celebrated philosophers of the age, but also, in the process, won for German philosophy a body of vitally important ideas that would go on to enrich it for generations to come.

[111] David Bell is certainly right to reject materialist interpretations of Spinoza – such as Lindner's and Adler's – as *interpretations*.

[112] This approach eventually reached its finest flowering in his *On the Spirit of Hebrew Poetry* (1782).

CHAPTER 5

Goethe's Spinozism

Eckart Förster

In 1812 Jacobi learned that Goethe was to embark on a third volume of his autobiography, which would also happen to cover the period of their first encounters. He wrote to Goethe to express his delight and to insist that Goethe not forget to mention their first memorable conversations about Spinoza, "so unforgettable to me" even after thirty-eight years.[1] Two years later, Jacobi held the printed volume in his hand, but what he read disappointed him deeply. As he wrote to Goethe in November, 1815: "It hurt and irritated me when I found the words at the end: 'And so, at last, we parted with the happy sense of eternal union, and wholly without a presentiment that our labors would assume opposite directions, as, in the course of life, was only too plainly revealed.'"[2] What Jacobi did not know was that Goethe had originally expressed their differences even more sharply but later decided to suppress these passages.[3]

Indeed, more than anything else it was their disagreement regarding Spinoza that over time brought out the deep-seated incongruence in their relationship.

From childhood on, Jacobi had worried "about things of another world" and felt a powerful "longing for certainty as regards higher human aspirations" – a longing that came to be the "dominant theme" in all his endeavors.[4] Someone with these sensibilities was bound to be repulsed by

[1] Jacobi to Goethe, December 28, 1812, in J. W. Goethe and F. H. Jacobi, *Briefwechsel zwischen Goethe und F. H. Jacobi*, ed. M. Jacobi (Leipzig: Weidmann'sche Buchhandlung, 1846), p. 260.

[2] *Ibid*., p. 269. The passage cited is from J. W. Goethe, *Aus meinem Leben: Wahrheit und Dichtung*, Book XIV (J. W. Goethe, *The Auto-Biography of Goethe. Truth and Poetry: From My Life,* ed. and trans. P. Godwin, Part III (London: Wiley and Putnam, 1847), p. 173.

[3] Originally Goethe had written: "Jacobi had God in mind, I nature. We were divided by what should have united us. The basis of our relationship remained steadfast: sympathy, love, trust were always the same, but the active interest [in the other] subsided in time, then ceased completely. We never exchanged any friendly words about our later works," HA 10:587.

[4] F. H. Jacobi, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, 2nd edn. (Breslau, 1789), p. 8; translated in F. H. Jacobi, *The Spinoza Conversation between Lessing and Jacobi,* ed. G. Vallée (Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 1988), p. 83.

a God like that of Spinoza, possessing neither will nor understanding and being antithetical to the very notion of purposiveness. Yet in the course of studying Spinoza, Jacobi came to be convinced that this was the very position to which any attempt at a universal philosophical explanation or foundation must inevitably lead. Any such attempt must embrace the principle *a nihilo nihil fit*, which according to Jacobi was the very "*spirit* of Spinozism."[5] Spinoza's system – with its exclusion of a personal God of Creation, its denial of human freedom and final causes, and its identification of the divine with nature as a realm of necessary law (*deus sive natura*) – was for Jacobi the unavoidable result of a desire for a universal explanation and foundation, and so a desire that, because of this consequence, one must resist at all costs.

Goethe, on the other hand, had come to Spinoza in an entirely different way. For him it was the thoughts expressed especially in the fifth book of the *Ethics*, of the third kind of knowledge and the blissful effect it has on the human mind, that marked the core of Spinoza's philosophy and made it exceptionally dear to him.

> [H]ere I found a sedative for my passions, and that a free, wide view over the material world, seemed to open before me. But what especially bound me to him, was the great disinterestedness [*Uneigennützigkeit*] which shone from every sentence. That wonderful expression, "He who loves God cannot strive that God should love him in return" [E5p19], with all the preliminary propositions on which it rests, and all the consequences that follow from it, filled my whole mind.[6]

Thus when, in 1785, Goethe held in his hands Jacobi's *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*, he felt that Jacobi's reading distorted what to him was most important in Spinoza: "I find it hard to compare what you say of him with what he himself says … You use a different order and different words to express his philosophy and I feel this is bound to break the real sequence of his most subtle ideas."[7] And a year later, in another letter to Jacobi:

> If you say, p. 101, that one can only believe in God, then I reply that I place stock in *seeing*, and when Spinoza says of *scientia intuitiva*: "This kind of knowing proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things" [E2p40s2, E5p25dem], those few words give me the courage to devote my whole life to the contemplation of things

[5] Jacobi, *Über die Lehre*, p. 18; *The Spinoza Conversation*, p. 87.
[6] Goethe, *Auto-Biography*, p. 170.
[7] Goethe to Jacobi, June 9, 1785, in Goethe and Jacobi, *Briefwechsel*, p. 86.

… of whose formal essence I can hope to conceive an adequate idea without in the least worrying about how far I'll get and how much is tailored to my mind.[8]

At the bottom of their differences lies Goethe's realization that, by identifying the "*spirit* of Spinozism" with the principle *a nihilo nihil fit*, Jacobi had in fact reduced it to a causal explanatory principle, and thus to a second kind of knowledge. For Goethe, however, Spinoza's "most subtle ideas" concern the *third* kind of knowledge. Jacobi thus missed precisely what is most original in Spinoza: "how much the knowledge of singular things I have called intuitive, or knowledge of the third kind, can accomplish, and how much more powerful it is than the universal knowledge I have called knowledge of the second kind" (E5p36s).[9]

Neither side was willing to yield any ground; what had begun as a friendly and enthusiastic exchange ended in silence.[10] Since Jacobi's position is the better known, I intend to take a closer look at Goethe's Spinozism. In particular, I want to examine the form that Goethe's 'devotion to the contemplation of things' came to acquire, and how he applied *scientia intuitiva* to natural objects.[11]

When, in 1776, Duke Karl August bought a garden for Goethe, he excited Goethe's ever-growing interest in botany. Before long Goethe studied various scientific treatises on plant life, including Linnaeus' *Systema naturae per regna tria naturae*. In this work Linnaeus had provided a systematic classification of the phenomena of the three kingdoms of nature (minerals, plants, animals). Goethe greatly admired Linnaeus' achievement, but regarded his principle of classification as ultimately unsatisfactory. For Linnaeus had based his classification of the different species on their external marks or properties: mammals he classified according to their teeth, birds according to their beaks, fish according to their fins, and plants according to the number and arrangement of their reproductive organs. Linnaeus asked himself repeatedly whether his system was 'true' in the sense that it represented nature's own system, or God's plan of Creation. Goethe went a step further. Shouldn't it be possible, he asked, to classify nature's objects, not just externally, according to some of their physical properties, but according to their inner nature, their respective essences?

[8] Goethe to Jacobi, May 5, 1786, in *ibid*., pp. 105–106.

[9] Translations from Spinoza's works are Edwin Curley's (C).

[10] See, e.g., the documents in J. W. Goethe, *Goethes Leben von Tag zu Tag*, ed. R. Steiger, 5 vols. Vol. IV: *1799–1806* (Zürich and Munich: Artemis, 1986), pp. 596–597.

[11] The following is a compressed version of what I developed more fully in E. Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), Chapters 4 and 11.

Thus he wrote to Lavater of "my longing for a new *Systema naturae*" and added, a week later, "Profound thoughts, entirely foreign to a young man, fill now my soul and immerse it in a new realm."[12]

But how is such a system of nature possible? How does one cognize natural objects, if not by their external properties? With these questions we have entered the proper domain of philosophy, and it was through Spinoza – his favorite philosopher – that Goethe was first moved to respond in a decisive way.

In the Appendix to Part 1 of his *Ethics*, Spinoza had written of a "standard of truth" (*veritatis norma*) different from the one widely accepted at the time – a standard employed in mathematics. Whereas the customary ways of investigation are, properly speaking, "only modes of imagining, and do not indicate the nature of anything," mathematics, by contrast, considers the essences and properties of figures and derives a figure's properties from its essence. Spinoza calls knowledge of this latter kind "the third kind of knowledge," "intuitive knowledge," or *scientia intuitiva* (E2p40s2).

Spinoza repeatedly used examples from mathematics to illustrate the distinctive nature of intuitive knowledge. If, for example, I define a circle as a figure in which the lines drawn from the center to the circumference are equal to each other, I will not be able to derive all the properties of the circle from my definition. It expresses merely a property of circles but not the essence of the figure. The case is different when I define the circle as a plane figure described by a line of which one end is fixed while the other is moveable. This definition is adequate and expresses the efficient cause so that all the properties of the circle can be derived from it. Of this Spinoza wrote: "And though … this does not matter much concerning figures and other beings of reason, it matters a great deal concerning physical and real beings, because the properties of things are not understood so long as their essences are not known." (TIE §95) A proper investigation of nature would thus have to aim at deriving the properties of its objects from their underlying essences.

Such thoughts filled Goethe with enthusiasm and inspired his botanic studies. Eventually, in the Botanic Garden of Palermo, Goethe realized that all essential properties of an annual plant can be derived from a single underlying "organ" or essence – an ideal "leaf" that manifests and metamorphoses itself in six successive phases of expansion and contrac-

[12] J. W. Goethe, *Briefe*, Hamburger Ausgabe, ed. K. R. Mandelkow, 4 vols. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1976), Vol. 1, pp. 279, 281.

tion. No sooner had he returned to Weimar than he published his results in *The Metamorphosis of Plants*. Thus at §73 he wrote:

> We first noted an expansion from the seed to the fullest development of the stem leaf; then we saw the calyx appear through a contraction, the flower leaves through an expansion, and the reproductive parts through a contraction. We will soon observe the greatest expansion in the fruit, and the greatest concentration in the seed. In these six steps nature steadfastly does its eternal work of propagating vegetation by two genders.[13]

When sending a copy of his book to Jacobi, he explained: "I plan to extend my investigations to the other kingdoms of nature in the same manner that you can find exemplified in this little work … Only time can tell what I may be able to achieve."[14]

At this point we must pause for a moment and ask how Goethe understood his procedure and how he conceived its extension to other realms of nature. First of all: what exactly is the procedure? *The Metamorphosis of Plants* describes the life cycle of an annual plant, but it is silent about the method that led Goethe to the discovery of its essential nature. Is it the method of Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva*? Can it possibly be? Hardly. In the case of mathematical objects like, for example, a circle, we know the underlying essence or idea, and the task is to give an adequate definition of it so that the properties of the object can be derived from it. With a natural kind, however, we do not know the essence but rather have to find it. How is this supposed to be possible? It is not at all clear whether Spinoza's third kind of knowledge *can* be extended to natural objects. And even if *The Metamorphosis of Plants* suggests that it may be possible, the text itself provides no answer to these questions. It is one thing to proceed methodically and quite another to be conscious of a methodology that can be justified and may justifiably be extended to other realms of nature.

Later in his life, Goethe admitted that initially he had had no clear idea of his method of investigation. "Back then I searched for the *Urpflanze*, unconscious of the fact that I was looking for the idea, the concept through which we can form a plant for ourselves."[15] And, on another occasion, somewhat more explicitly:

> In describing the metamorphosis of plants I found it necessary to develop a method which conformed to nature. There was no latitude for error as the

[13] In J. W. Goethe. *Scientific Studies*, ed. and trans. D. Miller (New York: Suhrkamp, 1988), p. 87.
[14] Goethe and Jacobi, *Briefwechsel*, p. 125.
[15] Goethe to Nees von Esenbeck, probably in August, 1817, in J. W. Goethe, *Werke*, Weimarer Ausgabe (Weimar: Hermann Böhlau, 1887–1919), IV/27:144.

vegetation revealed its processes to me step by step. Without interfering, I had to recognize the ways and means the plant used as it gradually rose from a state of complete encapsulation to one of perfection … [However], all the while I was only dimly aware of these things; nowhere did I find any enlightenment suited to my nature … Then the *Critique of the Power of Judgment* fell into my hands, and with this book a wonderful period arrived in my life.[16]

Why?

Kant's *Critique of the Power of Judgment* appeared in 1790, the same year as *The Metamorphosis of Plants*. The *Critique* was so important to Goethe because it shed light on precisely the methodological problem of which Goethe had been only dimly aware. It did so by addressing the fundamental difference between outer and inner purposiveness, between mechanical objects on the one hand, and living organisms on the other. A machine consists of parts that can exist independently of the whole into which they are now conjoined externally. In a living organism, by contrast, the parts have no existence outside the whole. Here parts and whole are mutually cause and effect of each other: no whole without the parts, but also no parts without the whole. Can we comprehend this? According to Kant, there is no difficulty in understanding how parts make possible a whole – this is the standard mechanical relationship. But how can a whole make possible its own parts and thus, as it were, precede them? This is unintelligible, Kant claims, except in a single case, namely, when the *idea* of a whole precedes its realization as an end or purpose – i.e., in the production of artefacts. Organisms, however, are not artefacts, but products of nature. They are not the works of an external craftsman, they organize themselves. "Strictly speaking," Kant writes at §65 of the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, "the organization of nature has nothing analogous with any causality known to us."

In order to comprehend the nature of a living thing, we would have to be able to derive its parts from the whole. That we can never do, Kant claims. Owing to the discursiveness of our mind, we cannot but move from parts to the whole. We may in the abstract *think* of a non-discursive, or intuitive, understanding: one unlike ours in its ability to proceed from the intuition of a whole as such to the parts. But, Kant insists, such an intuitive understanding would be a divine understanding, not a human one.

Despite his fascination with the Kantian analysis, Goethe could not agree with this last point. For had he not himself relied on such intuitive

[16] J. W. Goethe, "The Influence of Modern Philosophy," in *Scientific Studies*, pp. 28–29.

understanding in the *Metamorphosis of Plants*, albeit semi-consciously? Doesn't Kant's characterization of an intuitive understanding capture precisely what Goethe had practiced in Palermo? This much was clear to Goethe after reading the *Critique of the Power of Judgment*: one has to commence with the whole in order to determine the essence of a living thing. That is to say, the direction of Spinoza's method *has to be reversed*: instead of moving directly from the efficient cause to the properties, the intuitive understanding moves from the totality (whole) of the properties to their efficient cause.

Since Kant is correct in claiming that the whole *as a whole* is never given in immediate experience, one first has to generate it additively or discursively, by collecting its various parts into a whole. As Goethe now writes, "To follow every single experiment through its variations is the real task of the scientific researcher."[17] Only thereafter can one, in a second step, intuit the whole as a whole in order to discern whether it causes the parts – that is, to discern an essence or idea manifested in all the phenomena that constitute the object.

This seemed to be the missing link in Spinoza's account of a *scientia intuitiva*. Or at least, this is how it now seemed to Goethe: "Impelled from the start by an inner need, I had striven unconsciously and incessantly toward idea and archetype, and had even succeeded in describing a process which conformed to nature. Now there was nothing further to prevent me from boldly embarking on the 'adventure of reason' (as the Sage of Königsberg himself called it)."[18] The method of a *scientia intuitiva* could now be extended confidently to other realms of nature. Optics and the laws of color are what Goethe would devote himself to next.

> In the first two parts of my *Contributions to Optics* I sought to set up a series of contiguous experiments derived from one another in this way. Studied thoroughly and understood as a whole, these experiments could even be thought of as representing a single experiment, a single piece of empirical evidence, explored in its most manifold variations. Such a piece of empirical evidence, composed of many others, is clearly of a higher sort. It shows the general formula, so to speak, that overarches an array of individual arithmetic sums. In my view, it is the task of the scientific researcher to work toward experience of this higher sort.[19]

Goethe had published the first two parts of his *Contribution to Optics* in 1791 and 1792. Parts III and IV were advertised to appear the following

[17] J. W. Goethe, "The Experiment as Mediator between Object and Subject," in *ibid*., p. 16.
[18] J. W. Goethe, "Judgment through Intuitive Perception [*Anschauende Urteilskraft*]," in *ibid*., pp. 31–32 (translation modified).
[19] Goethe, "The Experiment as Mediator between Object and Subject," p. 16.

year, however they were never published. The *Contributions* broke off unfinished. Why?

In August of 1793, Goethe had sent the manuscript of Part III to the Göttingen physicist Lichtenberg and requested his expert opinion. Part III contained Goethe's explanation of colored shadows – a striking phenomenon that had first attracted his attention one evening while descending the snow-covered Brocken during a winter's journey through the Harz Mountains. The explanation Goethe gives is as follows. Since color emerges when light and dark meet, colored shadows are the result of the interplay of stronger and weaker light. More precisely: if there is a single source of light, the shadow it casts on a white surface will be black. But if the shadow is also illuminated from another source of light of different intensity, the shadow will be blue if the second source is weaker, yellow if it is stronger than the first source. Lichtenberg was not impressed with this explanation. In his extensive reply he drew attention to a different phenomenon that bears some striking similarity to colored shadows – colored afterimages: "It is, for example, certain that, if one looks long enough through a red glass and then abruptly removes it from one's eyes, all objects will for a moment appear green. If however one looks through a green glass, they will then appear red at first. This has to do with Buffon's so-called *couleurs accidentelles*, which one can observe in the eyes."[20]

Goethe's response is telling. He admits the similarity between colored shadows and the so-called *couleurs accidentelles*. However, he does not want to call the latter accidental, because, like colored shadows, they can be produced methodically in repeatable experiments. Yet for their similarity he has no explanation. Both sets of phenomena are related, and there are striking resemblances, yet they do not align themselves to form a series of contiguous experiments; they do not add up to the experience of 'a higher sort' such that their common essence might become discernible. Goethe still lacked insight into what, in the case at hand, is essential and what is derivative. A continuation of the *Contributions to Optics* was out of the question. The proper methodology for a *scientia intuitiva* was still unclear.

What exactly is the problem? Let us return once more to Goethe's characterization of the experience of a higher sort. It is composed of many others and "shows the general formula, so to speak, that overarches an array of individual arithmetic sums." Like a mathematical formula, the experience

[20] Lichtenberg to Goethe, October 7, 1793, in W. J. Goethe, *Briefe an Goethe*, Hamburger Ausgabe, ed. K. R. Mandelkow, 2 vols. (Munich: C. H. Beck, 1982), Vol. I, p. 140.

of a higher sort is said to allow for the derivation of a corresponding set of individual phenomena. But does it in fact do this? Let's take a given formula, for example, $y = 2x + 1$. It can be expressed in an array of individual mathematical sums: 1, 3, 5, 7, 9, 11, … There is no problem here. However, in the case with which we are presently concerned, we don't have the formula to begin with. Instead of developing a sequence of numbers from a given formula, our situation is analogous to the task of finding the formula from a given sequence of numbers. That is, at first we only have a sequence, for example, 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21. What is the underlying formula that generates this sequence? What would be the next number?

Clearly, the number sequence does not *by itself* give the formula according to which it was generated, and neither does the joining together of individual phenomena into a contiguous series yield the idea that generates them (*if* an idea generates them). Or, to use the terminology I employed earlier: the fact that I have determined all properties of an object (like all the stages of a life cycle of an annual plant) does not amount to the derivation of these properties from an underlying essence or inner nature of the object (plant). A mere sum of all properties of an object is not the same as the derivation of these properties from a common origin.

It seems that at this point Goethe is still spellbound by Spinoza's mathematical examples, all of which presuppose that the essence of their object is known. Something crucial is still missing from his account, but what is it exactly?

There are virtually no traces in Goethe's writings that indicate how he arrived at his solution. We must thus find the missing links ourselves. But the mathematical example may nevertheless point us in the right direction. What do I need to do in order to find the formula for the number sequence 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21, so that I may determine the next number? There is no doubt, I take it, that one must examine the transitions between the different members of the sequence, how each number relates to its predecessor. I must see how the series develops and ask whether there is a pattern, a law-like increase in the sequence. However that may be done in individual cases, I think there can be no doubt that the step from number sequence to underlying formula is via a study of the transitions between the members of the sequence.[21]

[21] Only such a study of the transitions between 1, 1, 2, 3, 5, 8, 13, 21 can reveal that after the second number each new number is the sum of the previous two, so that the formula we are seeking is the Fibonacci formula, $F_n = F_{n-1} + F_{n-2}$, $n \geq 2$.

With this in mind, a certain passage from Goethe's later *Morphologische Hefte* is particularly revealing. In the second *Heft*, under the title "Doubt and Resignation" ("Bedenken und Ergebung"), Goethe writes in general about the relation of idea and experience: "Here we meet the real difficulty, one we do not always see clearly: between idea and experience there inevitably yawns a chasm." This is precisely the chasm we are currently facing, the chasm between experience (of a higher sort) and the idea. Now Goethe continues:

> This difficulty of *uniting* idea and experience presents obstacles in all scientific research: the idea is independent of space and time while scientific research is bound by space and time. In the idea, then, simultaneous elements are closely bound up with sequential ones, but our experience always shows them to be separate; we are seemingly plunged into madness by a natural process which must be conceived of in [the] idea as both simultaneous and sequential.[22]

Besides idea and experience we are here presented with a third element, an element 'that one does not always see clearly,' but that is required to make the natural process intelligible: the unity of the two, or the connection between them. This third element was still missing when, in his essay "The Experiment as Mediator between Object and Subject," Goethe wrote that everything depends on setting up a series of contiguous experiments in such a way that they amount to, as it were, a single experiment. But if an idea (the whole) underlies a set of phenomena and is effective in them, and if in the idea simultaneous elements are intimately bound up with sequential ones, then simultaneous and sequential elements must jointly be present in the phenomena, *even though* our experience shows them to be separate. And this, in turn, must give rise to the thought that, if one is to seek out the underlying idea, one must examine the connections between what we perceive as separate, i.e., one must examine the *transitions* between the parts of a whole.

Let us now see if this thought can be substantiated with some examples from our everyday experience.

First example. Suppose that I am watching a movie – a modern, 'experimental' movie. The scenes appear to follow on from one another without any palpable connection: dates, locations, and actors change constantly. It is as if each scene presents an independent, self-contained episode. Eventually there comes the last scene, and it suddenly sheds light on everything that has occurred heretofore. It provides the key to an understanding of the film and reveals the idea the movie director set out to

[22] Goethe, *Scientific Studies*, p. 33; my emphasis.

realize. Suppose I now want to watch the movie a second time. Something decisive will happen: although I am watching exactly the same scenes again, this time I see each scene differently. For this time, the last scene, and with it my knowledge of the underlying idea of the movie, is present in, and infuses, every scene I view. It reveals how all the scenes, in spite of their initial appearance to the contrary, are internally connected and depend on each other.

In this example, after my first viewing of the movie, all the parts of a whole (all scenes of the movie) and its underlying idea are given, but not the inner connection of the scenes, the transitions between them. But these I can easily reconstruct, with the help of the idea, when I watch the film the second time. This gives rise to the following hypothesis: *if* a whole consists of three elements and two of them are given, then I can determine the third. Let us test this hypothesis by imagining a different but complementary scenario where idea and transitions are given and the parts have to be found.

Second example. This time we imagine a psychiatrist who also has strong philosophical interests. His favorite philosopher is Nietzsche. Because of his profession, he is especially interested in Nietzsche's madness and its causes. Again and again he asks himself what would have happened if Nietzsche had been able to undergo psychoanalysis. Since the onset of Nietzsche's madness coincides with the early years of psychoanalysis, such a thought is not altogether unrealistic. Eventually our psychiatrist forms the idea for a novel: *Nietzsche in Therapy*. Yet there is a problem: everything we know about Nietzsche tells us that he would never have agreed to such a therapy. So how is the idea to be realized? Our author comes up with a brilliant plot. In the story to be told, Nietzsche, who is justifiably proud of his profound psychological insights, has to be convinced that he, Nietzsche, has to treat someone else therapeutically, because only he can help that person – whereas in fact, and without Nietzsche's knowledge, his patient is the psychiatrist and Nietzsche is the object of the therapy. To this end a friend of Nietzsche's who is deeply concerned about his mental health (Lou Salomé), convinces a doctor she is acquainted with (Joseph Breuer, the mentor of Sigmund Freud) to collaborate with her in this plan and to offer himself as Nietzsche's 'patient.' Thus a framework or background story has been established that connects the beginning, middle, and end of our tale and functions as a red thread that regulates the transitions between the various scenes or parts of the novel. What is still missing is the parts themselves – the different scenes and episodes in which the idea of the book is to be realized. But these can now be found

in light of what is already given: they have to be scenes that are realistic in that they accurately reflect the local scenery and the milieu in Vienna at the end of the nineteenth century. And they must draw on Nietzsche's biography so that there will be a narrative about Nietzsche and not about someone who bears little resemblance to the philosopher.[23]

In my first example, the movie case, all the parts and the idea were given, and the transitions had to be elicited. In the latter example, both the idea and the transitions (the red thread) are given, but the parts remain to be discovered. Can we also think of a third case, one in which all the parts and the transitions are given but the idea has to be elicited? Here I don't have to imagine an example, for this is precisely the case that Goethe wants to master with the *scientia intuitiva*. From the totality of the parts and a careful reconstruction of the transitions between them, Goethe aims to discern the underlying idea operative in parts and transitions alike. In this case as well, two of the elements have to be given in order to determine the third. Now we can see that the multiple variations of experiments, of which Goethe had spoken in his essay on "The Experiment as Mediator between Object and Subject," represent only the *first* of two equally necessary steps. From now on, not surprisingly, he emphasizes the importance of the *second* step: "Be diligent in the observation of these transitions on which everything in nature ultimately depends."[24]

Of course, unlike the various parts of the sequence, the transitions between them are not given sensibly – just as little as in the case of the mathematical sequence I mentioned earlier. What is crucial, in both cases, is that they have actually occurred so that they may be reconstructed. To this end, Goethe writes, it is essential "that my thinking is not separate from [its] objects; that the elements of the object, the perceptions of the object, flow into my thinking and are fully permeated by it; that my perception itself is a thinking, and my thinking is a perception."[25] As in the case with the number sequence, here too I must reproduce the transitions in my mind, mentally reconstructing how each member of the series emerged from the one before it. Then comes the crucial step, for it is the one by means of which the understanding becomes intuitive: I must realize (visualize) in my mind all the transitions *simultaneously*. I must be

[23] This was the original idea for Irvin Yalom's bestseller, *When Nietzsche Wept*.

[24] J. W. Goethe, *Goethes Gespräche*, Biedermannsche Ausgabe, ed. W. Herwig, 5 vols., Vol. v (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1998), p. 84.

[25] J. W. Goethe, "Significant Help Given by an Ingenious Turn of Phrase," in *Scientific Studies*, p. 39.

present in all of the transitions at once in order to observe the simultaneous effectiveness of the idea in all the parts. Of this Goethe wrote:

> When I look at a natural object [*eine entstandne Sache*], inquire into how it came into being, and follow this process back as far as I can, I will find a series of steps. Since these are not actually seen together before me, I must visualize them in my memory so that they form a certain ideal whole. – At first I will tend to think in terms of steps, but nature makes no leaps. Thus, in the end, I will have to visualize this progression of uninterrupted activity as a whole, by dissolving the particular [as a *particular*] without destroying the impression itself.[26]

This requires practice. Moreover, it requires complete sequences on which one may practice. From now on, Goethe demanded that the plants in the Botanical Garden of Jena be grown, not where the soil was most suitable, but "where they must stand according to their systematic arrangement."[27] He insisted that botanical and physiological cabinets be set up, that mineralogical collections be started, and so on. In short, Goethe went out of his way to draw attention to the transitions between members of natural sequences. In this way, and by developing the methodology of an intuitive understanding in Kant's sense, he extended Spinoza's idea of a *scientia intuitiva* beyond mathematics and made it fruitful for the study of natural objects.

In conclusion, I want to address an objection that suggests itself at this point. I have failed to establish the possibility of an intuitive understanding, so the objection goes, and the two examples I have used are worthless in this context. That is because films and novels are works of art, created by particular individuals, representing their subjective purposes and ideas. 'Natural purposes,' by contrast, organize themselves, as Kant had insisted. For their explanation, consequently, one cannot presuppose an external artist with his subjective ideas. Thus works of art cannot illustrate the possibility of natural processes. The origin of the former is *subjective*, that of the latter *objective*.

I want to address this objection indirectly by first making recourse to an episode from antiquity.

When in the fifth century BCE the Greek island of Delos was besieged with a plague, its citizens turned to the Delphic oracle and pleaded for

[26] Excerpt from J. W. Goethe, "Studies for a Physiology of Plants," in *Scientific Studies*, p. 75 (translation amended).

[27] This was Goethe's stipulation in the contract for the incoming director of the Botanical Garden, F. J. Schelver. Cited in I. Schmid, "Die naturwissenschaftlichen Institute bei der Universität Jena unter Goethes Oberaufsicht," D.Phil. dissertation (Humboldt-Universität Berlin, 1979), pp. 49–50.

help. They were given the task to double the volume of the cubic altar in the temple of Apollo – in other words, to construct purely geometrically the side length of a cube twice its volume.

This problem occupied mathematicians for quite some time, given that it is unsolvable by classical means of construction, i.e., by using only compass and straightedge. Eventually Menaechmus found a solution that made use of two second-order curves intersecting. In this process he, as it were, 'discovered' the parabola and hyperbola, although he did not yet call them thus. A century and a half later, Apollonius of Perga integrated these curves into a general theory of the conic sections and assigned them their now familiar names.[28]

Apollonius was also an astronomer, but he would never have imagined that conic sections might be the trajectories of planets and comets. According to ancient belief, the heavenly bodies had to move on circular trajectories, these being the perfect curves. Thus Apollonius explained their trajectories and apparent retrograde motions in terms of combinations of circular motions (epicycles), and this formed the basis for the Ptolemaic astronomy which dominated the field for centuries to come. Even Copernicus, although replacing Ptolemy's system with the heliocentric one, assumed as obvious that the motion of heavenly bodies is circular and of uniform speed.[29]

Kepler was the first to challenge this assumption. Relying on Tycho Brahe's extensive observational data, he calculated the trajectory of Mars and concluded that it could not be circular. He conjectured that the planets move on ellipses with the sun occupying one of their two foci. That turned out to be correct. But how is one to understand that a law that Apollonius found inwardly in pure intuition governs the motion of the planets? Or, to use another example, how is one to understand that a projectile's trajectory is a parabola, as Galileo asserted at roughly the same time? Eventually Newton integrated these insights into a unified theory, according to which the trajectory of a body around a central body is always a conic section: depending on the initial speed, it is either an ellipse, a parabola, or a hyperbola. The laws of conic sections, although discovered in pure intuition, without interrogating nature, are at the same time laws of the physical world.

[28] Apollonius of Perga, *Treatise on Conic Sections*, ed. and trans. T. L. Heath (Cambridge University Press, 1896).

[29] See N. Copernicus, *On the Revolutions* (1543), trans. E. Rosen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992), Book 1, Chapter 4.

I simply want to put this forward as a *fact*, because an important consequence can be drawn from it with regard to the objection raised earlier. As the example of mathematics shows, it is not true in general that because something is found in the subject it cannot express an essential fact about a physical object. It is crucial in the present context, however, that a mathematical construction, although carried out in pure intuition, is entirely free of any traces of subjectivity. A proper construction shows no traces of the subject that carries it out. The construction (the mathematical proof), one might say, is above both subject and object – *above the subject*, because the subject in no way enters into the construction; *above the object*, because the construction is valid not just for the particular object constructed, but for all objects of its kind.

This is not the case with the movie director and the book author. Their own subjective representations and purposes are embodied in their works. Representations, unlike mathematical constructions, are not above subject and object. But as we saw earlier, both Spinoza and Goethe want to ascend from mere representations to something corresponding to mathematical constructions, to what they call idea, concept, or essence (like Goethe's *Urpflanze*, for example). It is characteristic of a *scientia intuitiva* that it does not aim at the formation of representations, but of concepts or ideas that (1) can only be discerned (revealed) in an intuitive understanding and hence within the subject, and (2) are nevertheless realized in the external world because they express the essences or inner natures of their objects.

The objection would only be valid, I maintain, if there was nothing else, apart from mathematics, that was objectively real although only discernible in the subject. Or to put the same point differently, if all non-mathematical ideas were *merely subjective*. But this would be an assumption that has not been proven. On the contrary, it is an assumption that is challenged by Spinoza and Goethe alike, and that I have been examining here. Simply to presuppose it would be uncritical and dogmatic.

To summarize: *if* it is the case that an idea underlies a set of phenomena and is causally effective in all its parts, then this can only be discovered by the method of *scientia intuitiva* that Goethe outlined and that I have discussed here. *Whether or not* an idea is effective in the phenomena in this sense can also be decided only by this method. The mere assurance by a discursive understanding that it is the only possible type of understanding is an assurance that is philosophically irrelevant.

CHAPTER 6

Fichte on the consciousness of Spinoza's God

Johannes Haag

Fichte criticizes Spinoza's philosophy in the context of his famous introduction of the original *Thathandlung* at the beginning of his *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre* from 1794: in some (all too short) remarks Fichte not only provides us with a convincing reason for the distinctiveness of God's thinking from our own in terms of the distinction between pure and empirical consciousness, but is furthermore able to indicate that this reason points to a decisive shortcoming of the Spinozistic system.

To understand this we have to investigate Fichte's reasoning concerning the conditions of empirical consciousness, and the self-consciousness presupposed in this kind of empirical consciousness. In so doing I will lay the foundation for my later argument that will build on the specific understanding of the *Thathandlung*, i.e., the original positing of a self as itself, as introduced by Fichte in the first section, shortly before the remarks on Spinoza. But it is not only the original *Thathandlung* that will be of great importance for understanding Fichte's criticism of Spinoza; another Fichtean concept, namely the concept of *intellectual intuition*, will prove of considerable consequence: it will play a decisive role in understanding the reasoning that leads Fichte to diagnose shortcomings in Spinoza's philosophy.

The basic idea I want to elaborate on is that while Spinoza's subjects of empirical consciousness are not capable of an intellectual intuition (in Fichte's sense), his God is not capable of proceeding from the original *Thathandlung* of self-positing to the next, likewise essential step of counter-positing. We will see that, as a consequence, God is not capable of an intellectual intuition either, albeit for different reasons. The decisive point in a Fichtean criticism of Spinoza therefore is that *neither* empirical subjects *nor* God can fulfill the conditions Fichte places on an explanation of consciousness.

FICHTE ON SELF-CONSCIOUSNESS AS A PROBLEM

As is well known, the guiding problem for Fichte was: how can self-consciousness be adequately *explained*? His diagnosis of the philosophical state of the art concerning this question is quite sobering: no philosopher before him could have provided a compelling answer, since his predecessors, if they addressed this question at all, would have been liable to the same fallacy. They were all confined to an *analysis* of self-consciousness that prohibited a successful explanation of this phenomenon right from the start. This analysis might be called *reflexive*, as it makes the self an object of its own thought.[1]

Why can this reflexive analysis, on Fichte's view, not be an adequate analysis of self-consciousness? Let me give a very brief sketch of Fichte's argument. As soon as we make ourselves an object of our thought we think *about* ourselves *as* ourselves. Yet in this reflexive thought we are again thinking subjects that stand in a relation to an object: we are conscious of an *object* – in this case, ourselves – and we are conscious of that object *as* ourselves. We have, in other words, a *de se* attitude toward ourselves.

Yet this reflexive analysis, Fichte argues, if it were the whole story, would mark the beginning of a regress: in analyzing self-consciousness merely reflexively we only *postpone* the problem. It resurfaces immediately as we take a look at what we did when we made ourselves an object of our own thinking in this particular way. We answered the question of the nature of self-consciousness by analyzing it as a consciousness of a particular object, albeit in a peculiar – i.e., *de se* – mode of representation. Yet, as Fichte puts it: "I can be conscious of any object only on the condition that I am also conscious of myself, that is, of the conscious subject. This proposition is incontrovertible" (FW 1:526f.).

In other words, consciousness of something as something *presupposes* self-consciousness. As soon as we move on and subject this self-consciousness in turn to the reflexive analysis, we make it an object of consciousness – and, of course, are again confronted by the same problem; for every new conscious relation to ourselves as an object we thus have to acknowledge the resurfacing of the original question.

[1] The following reconstruction of Fichte's critique of the reflexive analysis of consiousness was first put forward in detail by Dieter Henrich in "Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht," in Henrich and H. Wagner (eds.), *Subjektivität und Metaphysik: Festschrift für Wolfgang Cramer* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1966), pp. 188–232 (pp. 193–197).

This is the root of the regress: we have to postulate "another consciousness, one that takes the former as its object, and so on, forever. In this way, therefore, we will never arrive at a point where we will be able to assume the existence of any *actual* [*wirkliches*] consciousness" (FW 1:526; my emphasis).[2]

Such an *actual* or *real* consciousness for Fichte is apparently a consciousness that does *not* turn the subject of the thought into an object in the way described. For otherwise the subject of thought loses exactly the property that *makes* it a subject of thought in the first place, i.e., its being a *subject* of thought and not a mere *object*.

The resulting structure is that of a *dilemma*: we seem only able either to turn ourselves into an object – and thereby lose the property we are conscious of in self-consciousness; or not to turn ourselves into an object – in which case we would not have a consciousness of our self at all.

The culprit, for Fichte, is of course the restriction to the reflexive analysis of self-consciousness. His diagnosis of the fundamental flaw of this analysis reads as follows: "In every consciousness, therefore, the subject and the object were separated from each other and each was treated as distinct. This is why it proved impossible for us to comprehend consciousness in the above manner … Hence, what was just claimed must be false, and this means that the opposite of this claim is true" (FW 1:527).

The opposite, or negation of this claim is, as Fichte carefully points out, not that *no* consciousness, or even no self-consciousness, can separate subject and object; the negation that must be true, as Fichte postulates, is the claim that there is *some* consciousness in which subject and object are not separated.

In other words, Fichte does not need to reject the reflexive analysis of self-consciousness altogether – in fact, he doesn't. He ultimately, as I understand him, accepts the reflexive analysis as an analysis of *empirical* self-consciousness, understood as consciousness of us as ourselves. This analysis, however, cannot provide itself an *explanation* of the fact of empirical self-consciousness. If one takes it to do just that, it leads into a regress that we can characterize now as an *explanatory regress*. Consequently we still need an explanation of empirical consciousness.

[2] Fichte here and elsewhere does not sufficiently distinguish between self-consciousness and consciousness. He nowhere discusses seriously the possibility of a purely objective consciousness as, for instance, John Perry has recently defended in a number of papers (see, e.g., J. Perry, *Identity, Personal Identity, and the Self* [Indianapolis: Hackett, 2002]). I take it that this is a lesson from Kant he took for granted. Since I do so as well, I will not make this an issue in the argument that follows.

And in essence this explanation can only be provided for by an analysis of *pure* self-consciousness in which subject and object are not separated in the way they are according to reflexive analysis.[3]

But what does Fichte's explanatory alternative look like? It is important for my argument that any potential alternative has to fulfill *two* conditions. It has to show, first and obviously, that "there is a type of consciousness in which what is subjective and what is objective cannot be separated from each other at all, but are absolutely one and the same" (FW 1:527). And second, and somewhat less obviously, it must show that there is a way we can *access* this absolute conscious unity of subject and object – not necessarily conceptually, but still consciously.[4] This second condition, in other words, guarantees that this consciousness is a consciousness *for us*.[5]

Why introduce this second condition? The reason is not the otherwise hypothetical or postulational character of the unitary self-consciousness that might seem *unfounded* – for it could still be founded through transcendental reasoning concerning the conditions of the possibility of consciousness.[6] The *crucial reason* is that, unless this second condition is fulfilled, the postulation of such a consciousness cannot do justice to the factual givenness of real self-consciousness in empirical consciousness of objects (or even reflexive consciousness of ourselves). The postulated consciousness would therefore be yet *another* consciousness, not the consciousness of subjectivity we are after in the analysis of the self-consciousness present in any of our conscious states. Though a

[3] This is, however, not meant to exclude the possibility that pure self-consciousness can, in a sense to be specified, become a part or an ingredient of empirical self-consciousness. Fichte in his *Second Introduction* makes clear that this is indeed the right way to look at it; see FW 1:464–465.

[4] The *conceptual* access is gained not by every empirical subject, but only by the philosopher who theoretically reconstructs the whole process of self-positing, counter-positing, and limitation, and thereby becomes aware of himself being subject of this process. The non-conceptual access necessarily available to every empirical subject is, of course, founded in intellectual intuition and, hence, *intuitive* access. Only the philosopher, however, is able through the conceptual isolation of the intellectually intuitive element in empirical consciousness to achieve something like a pure intuitive access; see FW 1:465.

[5] I take this to be the meaning of Fichte's frequent insistence in the first paragraph of the *Grundlage* that we are "for the self" (*ibid*. 1:98). If correct, this would seem to imply that the alleged revision of the position as presented in the *Grundlage* (1794) to the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* of 1797 as diagnosed by Henrich (see Henrich, "Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht," p. 202) relating to the change from 'positing of oneself' to 'positing of oneself as positing' would be better understood as a clarification of an important element already present in the earlier work.

[6] On the other hand, Fichte repeatedly expressed skepticism concerning some forms of transcendental reasoning – especially concerning arguments that Paul Franks calls "regressive transcendental arguments" (P. Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* [Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005], p. 315). Fichte seems to have had doubts concerning arguments of this from as early as 1793. See *ibid*., pp. 251–257.

consciousness of subject and object in the required sense, it could not achieve what it is postulated for: that is, to explain the conscious subjectivity in our intentional relation to objects, i.e., the *de se* attitude we seek to explain.[7]

To explain self-consciousness adequately we consequently have to determine a mental act (a consciousness, in Fichte's terminology),

(1) in which subject and object are not separated,

and

(2) that is accessible for us as an act in which this separation is not yet carried out.

I will refer to the first condition as *condition of unity*, while the second condition is a *condition of accessibility*.

As I hope to make plausible, the first condition is fulfilled by the original *Thathandlung* Fichte introduces at the beginning of the *Grundlage*, while the second condition requires (and motivates) the introduction of the concept of an *intellectual intuition*. Only taken together can the two concepts give us a truly adequate concept of self-consciousness.[8]

THATHANDLUNG AND INTELLECTUAL INTUITION

So, how can we uncover a consciousness that does not separate subject and object? In the *Grundlage* of 1794 Fichte presents us with a method to reveal this *real* or, as he puts it in this earlier text, *pure* consciousness in a systematic manner by reflectively abstracting[9] from a given fact of empirical consciousness. In this way he hopes to establish an original act of consciousness that he calls a *Thathandlung* and that itself is not one of the facts of *empirical* consciousness but "rather lies at the basis of all [empirical] consciousness and alone makes it possible." This *Thathandlung*,

[7] For a similar line of reasoning cf. Henrich, "Fichtes ursprüngliche Einsicht," p. 203. Again, I do not think that this consideration is an addition to the later *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* from 1797.

[8] It should be clear from this exposition that I do not believe the concept of intellectual intuition to be restricted to the later *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, but understand both versions to be in fundamental agreement concerning the task, if not the method, of the *Wissenschaftslehre*. I will come back to this below.

[9] Reflection and abstraction as understood in the *Grundlage* convey the method of first descriptively reflecting about what ordinarily may be thought to belong to the concept under investigation (*reflection*), and afterwards abstracting "from everything that does not really belong to it" (FW 1:91; *abstraction*).

consequently, has to be an act of consciousness that does not separate subject and object.

The fact of empirical consciousness that Fiche takes as the point of departure for his analysis is the indisputable proposition of identity, A = A. By carefully detaching from this 'fact of empirical consciousness' one *empirical* feature after another, he ultimately arrives at something *pure* that "can no longer be abstracted from, and from which nothing further can be detached" (FW 1:92).

The details of this process need not detain us; they are of no importance to the present argument. Suffice to say that, in a number of intermediate steps,[10] he first gets from the proposition "A = A" to the proposition "I = I" or "I am I." Both propositions express *facts* of *empirical* consciousness, as can be easily verified by recognizing the explicit distinction between subject and object in the proposition "I am I." Hence the proposition "I am I" cannot be taken to express a consciousness in which this separation is not yet carried out. As Fichte pointedly says, a fact (*Thatsache*) *cannot* be an act (*Thathandlung*) – this goes even for a fact as interesting as the fact "I am I."

The question at this point of Fichte's analysis is: how can we get from the *Thatsache* that I am I, to a *Thathandlung* that can serve as the 'basis' for this fact? We have to start by considering what makes the fact *that I am* special. As in every categorical proposition something is presupposed or, as Fichte has it, *posited absolutely*, in the proposition that expresses this fact: namely what the subject-term refers to.[11] In the case at hand we find that the proposition "I am I" presupposes the proposition "I am." In the

[10] In fact, there are five intermediate steps that the abstractive reflection has given us so far:
(1) In making judgments like "A = A," we are interested not in the *reference*, but in the *relation*, which is immediately certain owing to its *form* (abstraction from content).
(2) This relation is posited, i.e., claimed, unconditionally in the judgment in question. The asserted relation consequently is an absolute one (characterization of form).
(3) Something has to be posited by somebody as the subject of a judgment and the relation has to be chosen.
(4) The judging subject is responsible for the positing of the subject of the judgment and the choosing of the relation – and hence for the asserted relation being an absolute one, since the conditionally posited subject of the judgment unconditionally or absolutely determines the predicate.
(5) The relation in question can also be expressed as "I = I" (condition of the possibility of the form).
The problematic transition from step 4 to step 5 is *justified* by the fact that "I = I" obviously is of the form "A = A" (and we are only interested in form, not in content or reference). It is, furthermore, *required*, since "I = I" asserts the self-identity of the judging subject, and therefore at the same time asserts the unity that makes the judgment possible in the first place.

[11] What the object-term refers to is, in comparison, posited only *conditionally*, since it presupposes what the subject-term refers to.

proposition "I am I" the fact *that I am* is therefore posited unconditionally or absolutely.

The same would at first glance seem to apply to every other fact that is expressed by propositions starting with "I am." It is not in the same way presupposed in every other expression of empirical fact: as soon as we posit anything (as we do in every categorical claim such as "A = A") we posit it *in ourselves* – and therefore we posit ourselves in the form of the empirical claim "I am I." No other claim of the form "I am *X*" is fundamental in this way. In fact, it is at this point of the argument that – by way of reflective abstraction – we have arrived at the special *de se* character of facts of empirical self-consciousness that Fichte aims to explain![12]

This particular fact of empirical consciousness therefore is a presupposition of every other fact of this kind. Fichte concludes: "Hence it is a ground of explanation of all the facts of empirical consciousness, that prior to all positing in the self, the self itself is posited" (FW 1:95).

The transition from this particular fact of empirical consciousness to the *Thathandlung* is now surprisingly simple: Fichte introduces this decisive step in his argument by pointing to the (likewise empirical) fact that *judging* is an "activity of the human mind" (FW 1:95). This activity, as we have seen, is in turn founded on something posited absolutely, i.e., the fact that I am – a fact that is thus presupposed in every act of judgment. Since we have to abstract from all *empirical* features in our analysis we have to concentrate on the '*pure* character of activity' (see FW 1:96). Consequently, this pure character of activity can be nothing but the pure activity of positing oneself that underlies the proposition "I am."

> The self's own positing of itself is thus its own pure activity. The self *posits itself*, and by virtue of this mere self-positing it *is*; and conversely, the self *is* and *posits* its own existence by virtue of merely existing. It is at once the agent and the product of action; the active, and what the activity brings about; action and deed are one and the same, and hence the "I am" expresses an Act [*Thathandlung*], and the only one possible, as will inevitably appear from the *Wissenschaftslehre* as a whole. (FW 1:96)

[12] Accordingly, the first steps in the consideration the *Grundlage* starts with can be understood to serve a similar purpose to the 'guidance through an entrance' of the first chapter of the later *Wissenschaftslehre* from 1797 (see FW 1:526f.): both the reflexive abstraction of the *Grundlage* and the *reductio*-argument of the later text are intended to exhibit in all necessary clarity the explanatory end of the theory of self-positing.

So the original act of positing is a *Thathandlung* of the pure consciousness: the consciousness is *pure*, since we abstracted from all its empirical features. It is *not a fact* (*Thatsache*), since facts are posited already. And yet it is *not only an act* (*Handlung*), since the act itself constitutes the existence of the self. Since the *Thathandlung* is unconditioned or absolute, Fichte calls the subject of this positing a *pure* or *absolute* self.

In this absolute *Thathandlung* the separation of subject and object is indeed not yet carried out: it cannot be, since all separation requires determinateness of the things to be separated. Thus the determinate consciousness of a self requires the positing of something that is *not* this self – a positing that is an act of *opposition* or *counter-positing*, i.e., the second part of the complex tripartite original activity required for empirical consciousness.

This determinateness is therefore necessarily absent in the completely undetermined act of original self-positing.[13] The positing of the self, consequently, qualifies as an act of consciousness that indeed fulfills the *condition of unity*.

But what about our second condition: the *condition of accessibility*? Could the *Thathandlung* in itself do justice to this condition as well? To answer the question of whether this act in itself does fulfill the condition of accessibility, a crucial fact concerning the conception of a *Thathandlung* must be observed: the *Thathandlung* as introduced above (i.e., as introduced at the beginning of the *Grundlage*) is an act that is *abstracted* from a fact of our empirical consciousness and consequently does trivially fulfill the condition of accessibility! We may not yet have determined the nature of the faculty that allowed us to bring about this feat; but we cannot reasonably doubt that the *Thathandlung* is accessible in the required sense since we just *did* access it.

But, arguably, not every *Thathandlung* as an original positing of the unity of subject and object has to be of that kind: not every positing in this sense has to be a positing that leads to empirical consciousness of the self thus posited. It seems to be at least conceptually possible that there should be an act of self-positing that is not accessible in an act of

[13] Not every self-positing can be original, since we as conscious subjects are engaged in it constantly. The original self-positing Fichte arrived at in the *Grundlage*, however, is an indispensable ingredient in a genetic story of the possibility of acquiring determined self-consciousness in the first place. (There is, even for the transcendental philosopher, no way back to the original act of self-positing: facts are already posited. This is the reason for Fichte to insist that the intellectual intuition for him never can be *Thathandlung*, but only *Thatsache*. See FW 1:465.)

consciousness of whatever nature. In a slightly perverted sense of the concept of *consciousness*, such an act could still be considered an act of *pure consciousness*, where the purity would never be taken any further and thus the self-posited in this act would never be conscious of itself at all, since the consciousness in question would remain permanently undetermined. As Fichte has it: "The absolute self … is not *something* (it has, and can have no predicate)" (FW 1:109).

What *distinguishes* an absolute self, restricted to the original *Thathandlung*, from beings like ourselves that possess empirical consciousness, is the fact that *for us* the act of self-positing can be reconstructed just as a *first* step in the complex activity presupposed in empirical, and hence determinate, consciousness. As Fichte famously elucidates in the paragraphs following the introduction of the act of self-positing, the way to consciousness comprises two more steps.[14]

I already pointed to the *act of opposition* or *counter-positing*. This act is abstracted from the proposition "A = non-A," another fact of empirical consciousness. It is likewise an *absolute* or *unconditioned* act, since the act of positing in no way allows the inference of an act of opposition: "The form of counter-positing is so far from being contained in that of positing, that in fact it is flatly opposed to it" (FW 1:102). This act of counter-positing gives us a "mere contrary [*Gegentheil*] in general" (FW 1:103), a *not-self*, and therefore is, as I said above, crucial for the determination that in turn is necessary for empirical consciousness.[15]

Counter-positing, though a condition of the possibility of determination, cannot itself be an act of determination. With positing and counter-positing we just have two acts of absolute positing related to each other in a way as yet *undetermined*: we already know that the self of the *Thathandlung* is completely undetermined, *and* we can conclude that the not-self has to be likewise undetermined in the act of its own (counter-)positing. For the not-self would only be determined through a *determinate* self. In this case it would be everything the determinate self is *not*.[16]

[14] The following outline of Fichte's argument owes much to E. Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), Chapter 8.

[15] The act of counter-positing, while absolute in not being conditioned concerning its *form*, *is* conditioned concerning its *matter*; it is an act that as *counter*-positing is essentially related to the act of *positing* that it opposes. "Whether such an act is possible at all," Fichte concludes, "depends on another act … It is only in relation to a positing that it becomes a counter-positing" (FW1:103).

[16] See FW 1:109–110.

What is needed, therefore, is a *third* step in the reconstructed generation of self-consciousness that somehow reconciles the two acts of positing and counter-positing and thus determines both of them – hence providing us with empirical consciousness.

The task for this third step is set through the first two acts: since the first two positings are *absolute* positings, they threaten the unity of consciousness in each negating the other. The third step, accordingly, consists in finding a way of reconciling positing and counter-positing that is able to conserve this unity. To achieve this, both acts have to be *limited* with respect to each other.[17]

In this way the unity of consciousness is saved from the threat of disintegrating. The resulting unity contains both a determinate self and a determinate not-self – and thus can serve as a unity of consciousness in which empirical consciousness is possible as a consciousness of a determinate object – be it a limited not-self *or* a limited self.

Even more importantly for the topic at hand, this opens the possibility for the original *Thathandlung* to become a conscious counterpart of every act of empirical consciousness – a possibility that sharply distinguishes the *Thathandlung* we identified by the reflective and abstractive process just outlined from the conceptually possible *Thathandlung* that, as a matter of principle, *never* becomes conscious of itself. *We* obviously have this ability, and the self-positing that originally laid the foundation for empirical consciousness is therefore consciously present in each and every act of empirical consciousness.

This consciousness of the act of continuously self-positing, however, cannot be discursive or conceptual consciousness. This would make it a reflexive consciousness of the self as an object again. It has to be a non-discursive form of knowledge or consciousness instead. Non-discursive knowledge does not determine anything conceptually, but amounts to an un-determining awareness of something, i.e., an awareness that cannot be an awareness of something *as* something. This peculiar form of awareness is given to us in the act of an *intellectual intuition*. But this act of awareness may not be distinct from the *Thathandlung* it makes us aware of – for this

[17] Fichte in this third step does not need to start with another fact of empirical consciousness, but can argue by way of formal deduction, since we already have two propositions to work with in the deduction. The proposition expressing the third act therefore can *in large part* be inferred from the propositions expressing the two others. We can deduce from the first two propositions the *task* that the third act has to perform. Consequently the third act is, in Fichte's terminology, conditioned concerning its *form*. It is, however, another absolute act in being unconditioned with respect to the *solution* of this task, i.e., its *matter*. (This solution is supposed to be due to a "decree of reason" [FW 1:106]).

would lead to exactly the regress we wanted to avoid.[18] The intellectual intuition that makes us aware of the *Thathandlung* is itself just the *Thathandlung as carried out by subjects like us*! As Fichte writes in the later *Versuch*: "I am this intuition and nothing else. And this intuition itself is me" (FW 1:529).

This Fichtean intuition, accordingly, is in *one* respect an intellectual intuition in the Kantian sense, i.e., an intuition that, unlike sensible intuition, produces its object. In Fichte's case the object would be the self that is posited by the consciousness of itself. At the same time, putting it this way emphasizes the fundamental difference to the Kantian form of intellectual intuition reserved for God: it might look at first glance as if the self were yet another object of consciousness – and we had God-like abilities. But this could only be correct, if the entity posited were *distinct* from the act of positing – which, as we have seen, for Fichte it clearly was not. It was, after all, the whole point of introducing the concept of a *Thathandlung* that subject and object would *not* be distinguished in this act. This denial of separation accordingly allows for a different, ontologically neutral conception of self-positing as a form of producing; we do *not* by this act produce an object, but a subject-object that *is* consciousness in virtue of the specific kind of *Thathandlung* characteristic for subjects like us: a *Thathandlung* that *proceeds by intellectual intuition* and produces a self that is nothing but pure consciousness.[19]

Before we proceed to Fichte's Spinoza-critique, however, a problem must be addressed: if intellectual intuition was so important for Fichte even at the time of the *Wissenschaftslehre* of 1794, why is it that Fichte never so much as mentions this concept in the text of the *Grundlage*?[20] I would like to argue that this is due to a difference in focus and method of the earlier and the later *Jenaer Wissenschaftslehre*.

The basic idea is that the argument of the *Grundlage* establishes the necessity of self-positing, but does not make transparent how this process would actually be possible. In the *Grundlage*, accordingly, Fichte proceeds by way of deduction[21] and argues that self-positing in an original

[18] Although for us it is a *Thatsache*, for the reasons elucidated in n. 14, above. This, however, does not threaten its essential character of being an activity, but only serves to highlight the fact that the *Thathandlung* cannot be original anymore, since the further steps of counter-positing and mutual limitation cannot be undone.

[19] Paul Franks helpfully puts this contrast in terms of Fichte's intellectual intuition, like Kant's, being *self-actualizing*, but, unlike Kant's intellectual intuition, not *creative*. See Franks, *All or Nothing*, p. 311.

[20] Frederick Beiser, Dalia Nassar, and Michael Vater put this question forward in discussion.

[21] I would like to describe his deductive method in the first paragraphs of the *Grundlage* as a transcendental argument. For an alternative description of the methodological difference between the earlier and the later *Jenaer Wissenschaftslehre*, see Franks, *All or Nothing*, pp. 338–348. Franks,

Thathandlung is the only way to explain empirical self-consciousness. But this leads to the difficulty that I have to think something that at the same time is product and act of production. While I may have formal conceptual access to this original activity, I cannot really understand what this is supposed to mean – though I can reconstruct from this original act everything else. The method of the *Grundlage*, however, has to leave it at that.

Truly to comprehend this original act I have to take one step further and not only conceptually isolate this act of self-positing as it is present in every single conscious act, but elevate myself to the standpoint of intellectual intuition[22] and re-enact the *Thathandlung* as far as that is possible for an already conscious being.[23] But this intuitive or constructive method is not available to a purely discursive method like the one employed in the *Grundlage*.[24]

Let me quickly summarize the important points of this sketchy discussion of the role of *Thathandlung* and intellectual intuition in the analysis of self-consciousness. Not every act of self-positing that meets the condition of unity of subject and object can guarantee *empirical consciousness*. Without empirical consciousness, however, an act of this kind cannot be accessible to our consciousness and hence violates the *condition of accessibility*.

For empirical consciousness to be possible, the first act of self-positing accordingly has to be supplemented by further acts of counter-positing and limitation. Only an act of self-positing that meets *both* conditions by allowing for the supplementation of the two other unconditioned acts could qualify as an act of self-positing that can explain self-consciousness. An act of self-positing that *does* meet both conditions is the *intellectual intuition* by way of which *we* (originally and continually) carry out the *Thathandlung*.[25]

however, seems to share the estimation that there is an "underlying unity of Fichte's first and second Jena presentations – without, of course, denying the significant differences between them" (Franks, *All or Nothing*, p. 339). In the quoted paragraph Franks presents as much evidence for Fichte's continuing adherence to the concept of intellectual intuition as one could wish for.

[22] How this may be done Fichte tries to illustrate, for instance, in the later *Versuch*. See FW 1:531ff.

[23] For the inevitable restrictions, see n. 19.

[24] This helps to explain why Fichte, in the Preface to the second edition of the *Grundlage* (written in 1801), still lends his support to the original way of exhibition.

[25] Hence, it should not come as a surprise that Fichte sometimes uses the term "intellectual intuition," not just for this act of self-positing but also for the reflexive act of the philosopher who makes this act the object of his reflected philosophical consciousness. For even the philosopher who aims to establish a *Wissenschaftslehre*, after having made the relevant conceptual distinctions and thereby having adequately isolated intellectual intuition, has to re-enact the original

Intellectual intuition and empirical consciousness have thereby been shown to be mutually dependent: we would not have an empirical consciousness without intellectual intuition of our own self-positing that *is* this very self-positing; but, conversely, we would not be able to engage in intellectual intuition without empirical consciousness. For only during acts of empirical consciousness are we at the same time conscious of ourselves in the sense required. Only empirically conscious selves are intuitively aware of themselves and hence of the act of self-positing.

FICHTE'S CRITICISM OF SPINOZA IN THE *GRUNDLAGE* (1794)

Against this background, let me now turn to Fichte's remarks on Spinoza at the end of the first section of the *Grundlage*. Fichte starts by stating that Spinoza has transcended the proposition that encompasses the original *Thathandlung* of self-positing, i.e., the proposition that "*I am absolutely; i.e., I am absolutely because I am; and am absolutely what I am; both for the self*" (FW 1:98).[26] While other philosophers, notably Descartes and Reinhold, on Fichte's view did not go far enough, Spinoza overreached.

Fichte does not immediately proceed to criticize Spinoza, but points out features of Spinoza's system that are relevant for his criticism and reformulates them in terms of his own theory. As one might expect, the criticism is related to the latter's conception of ideas as *representations of thinking individuals* as opposed to ideas as *modifications of the one substance*, i.e., God. As Fichte puts it, in a slightly involved way: "On his [Spinoza's] view, the whole series of ideas [*Vorstellungen*] in an empirical subject is related to the one pure subject as a single idea is to a series" (FW 1:100).

The pure subject here is, of course, the one substance. Fichte's characterization suggests, then, not inaccurately, that a series of ideas in the consciousness of an empirical subject is, in relation to the one substance, nothing more than one (tiny) fraction of the series of ideas that are the whole of modifications of this substance under the attribute of thinking. In being just a small part of a much more complex series this relation of a

act of self-positing to become intuitively aware of it as an act of self-positing. It is, consequently, ultimately an act of the very same kind that the philosopher has to re-enact for the purpose of his investigation – and for the ultimate achievement of "transcendental self-consciousness" (Franks, *All or Nothing*, p. 312).

[26] The context makes quite clear that it is this formulation of the *Thathandlung* that he has in mind.

finite series to the infinite one that comprises it can be assimilated to the relation of a singular idea of an empirical subject to the whole series of ideas that ultimately constitutes this subject. And Fichte goes on to elucidate: "For him the self (what he calls *his self*, or what I call *mine*) [i.e., the empirical self] does not exist absolutely *because* it exists; but because *something else* [i.e., God] exists" (FW 1:100).

This statement, of course, reflects the ontological dependence of the empirical subjects on the Spinozistic substance. It does so in terms that take up the first part of Fichte's own expression of the *Thathandlung*, the proposition that "*I am absolutely; i.e., I am absolutely because I am*"; Spinoza's empirical selves, on the contrary, do *not* exist absolutely *because* they exist. Spinoza has no place for the self-positing as carried out by the *Thathandlung* – at least not as far as finite subjects are concerned.

Fichte goes on to emphasize that Spinoza's empirical subjects are, nevertheless, supposed to exist *as selves* for themselves, i.e., from their own perspective: "The [empirical] self is certainly a self *for* itself, in his theory" (FW 1:100). The empirical subjects, consequently, are supposed to have empirical (hence, reflexive) self-consciousness. But unfortunately their self is a self *only* for themselves – while in fact it is something else for another self.

Spinoza, however, on Fichte's view, goes astray now[27] in *not* asking what the self is for itself and then providing the foundations for *that* question (by turning to the pure consciousness *given* in empirical consciousness as its foundation in Fichte's own manner).

Spinoza asks instead "what it [i.e., the empirical self] would be for something *other* than the self" (FW 1:100; my emphasis), namely God. "Such an 'other,'" he continues, "would equally be a self, of which the posited self (e.g., mine) and all other selves that might be posited [i.e., the empirical selves] would be modifications." Spinoza, therefore, Fichte concludes, separates the two kinds of consciousness that, on Fichte's own account, are bound together inseparably: "He separates *pure* and *empirical* consciousness. The first he attributes to God, who is never conscious of himself, since pure consciousness never attains to consciousness; the second he locates in the specific modifications of the Deity" (FW 1:100f.).

In a moment I will come back to the question that Fichte's criticism, as voiced in this culminating remark of his short discussion of Spinoza, amounts to. Let us first take a glance at Fichte's own *evaluation* of this criticism: "So established his system is perfectly consistent and irrefutable,

[27] Signaled by Fichte's use of "but he goes on to ask" (FW 1:100).

since he takes his stand in a territory where reason can no longer follow him; but it is also groundless; for what right did he have to go beyond the pure consciousness given in empirical consciousness?" (FW 1:101).

This evaluation, as I will argue in the remainder of my discussion, seems unjustifiably charitable: the Spinozistic system, viewed against the background of Fichte's own argument in the first three sections of the *Grundlage*, does not seem irrefutable at all.

For if this argument is conclusive, there seems at the very least one serious shortcoming of this system. From the separation of pure and empirical consciousness it indeed follows that the pure consciousness of Spinoza's God, fundamentally *unlike* our own consciousness, cannot become determinate consciousness as a matter of principle. And while Fichte is right, as I would like to show, that Spinoza would not have a problem with this fact in itself, a connected consequence will prove fatal to his doctrine: Spinoza, as a consequence of restricting God to pure consciousness, loses the ability to account for the existence of empirical consciousness in general.

It follows that, if one were to accept Fichte's reading of Spinoza, as I think we should, one could not at the same time grant Spinoza's system the conceptual resources for a consistent conception of consciousness.[28]

The two remaining steps, accordingly, must be:

(1) an outline of an interpretation of Spinoza's views on God's consciousness that I take to be in line with Fichte's sketchy remarks; and
(2) an argument to the end that the ensuing system is not, as Fichte in too great deference claims, "perfectly consistent and irrefutable," but fundamentally flawed because it cannot account for the fact of empirical consciousness.

The basic idea in the first, exegetical step will be to distinguish the relation of God's ideas to their objects from the relation of our ideas to *their*

[28] Accordingly, I think that – against the background of the considerations at the beginning of the *Grundlage* – Fichte is indeed justified in his rejection of the Spinozistic picture of consciousness. One can supplement these points by arguments developed in the practical part of the *Grundlage* (for this strategy see J. Brachtendorf, "Substanz, Subjekt, Sein: Die Spinozarezeption der frühen und der späten Wissenschaftslehre," in G. Zöller and H. G. von Manz [eds.], *Fichtes Spätwerk im Vergleich,* Fichte-Studien 30 [London and New York: Rodopi, 2006], pp. 57–70 [pp. 62–63]), but the point from the theoretical part of the *Grundlage* can be made in full force without that. (By invoking intellectual intuition as laid out in the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo*, one could argue, my own strategy partly invokes thought from the realm of practical philosophy. However, Fichte in the *Wissenschaftslehre nova methodo* rejects the theoretical–practical distinction and starts, as it were, from a point of departure common to theoretical and practical philosophy. It is this common origin I am interested in in my argument.)

objects while still accounting for the fact that ultimately our ideas taken absolutely are just God's ideas.

The basic idea of my second, argumentative step is that Spinoza's system does not leave the space for the second original action of counter-positing, which is indispensable for the generation of empirical, determinate consciousness, and hence a consciousness that includes the pure consciousness of the first *Thathandlung* as the consciousness of a foundation of this very empirical consciousness.

THE CONSCIOUSNESS OF SPINOZA'S GOD

In accessing the theory of ideas as laid down in his *Ethics* it is of the greatest importance carefully to distinguish between different ways to conceive of what ontologically are one and the same object.[29] One has to differentiate between what ideas are in relation to the empirical subject and what they are with respect to the infinite substance.

Spinoza's theory of ideas concerning *finite* subjects is pretty much Cartesian in design: he distinguishes an idea and its content from the intentional object of this idea, as it exists in itself. These two aspects correspond to the Cartesian distinction between the objective and formal reality of the object of an idea: this object exists *objectively* (*objective*) in the idea, but *formally* (*formaliter*) in itself.[30] Since ideas ontologically are modifications (*modi*) of a substance, it follows trivially that they themselves have formal being, i.e., can be taken *materially* (*materialiter*).[31] As human beings we consequently use ideas intentionally to refer to the objects they represent.[32]

[29] For a more detailed account see J. Haag, "Spinoza über die Intentionalität geistiger Zustände," *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie* 57 (2009), 449–469.

[30] See E2p17c1ff., E2p17s, E2p44s.

[31] Daisie Radner, fatally, rejected this; see D. Radner, "Spinoza's Theory of Ideas," *Philosophical Review* 80 (1971), 338–359 (pp. 345f.). But see the conclusive criticisms in M. Wilson, "Objects, Ideas, and 'Minds': Comments on Spinoza's Theory of Mind," in *Ideas and Mechanism: Essays on Early Modern Philosophy* (Princeton University Press, 1999), pp. 26–40 (p. 132); and M. Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind–Body Problem in Spinoza* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), p. 51. Spinoza leaves little doubt that ideas have formal being as well; see, for instance, E2p17s.

[32] Here one must carefully distinguish between the intentional object of an idea – for which Spinoza reserves the expression *ideatum* in the first two books of the *Ethica* (see E1a6, E1p30d, E2d4e, E2p43s) – and the bodily mode that is the object of the idea qua being the identical mode conceived under a different attribute. Only the relation of an idea to an *ideatum* is an intentional relation (though it should be conceived as a complex form of a non-intentional relation of indication). (This explains an important characteristic of the ideas–things parallelism that, as Yitzhak Melamed observes, is not shared by other inter-attribute parallelisms. See Y. Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance and Thought* [Oxford University Press, 2012], Chapter 4.)

Those intentional states can be viewed as acts of empirical consciousness in Fichte's use of the term. Since ideas themselves can become intentional objects,[33] we can consciously refer to our own ideas as *our* ideas and, as a consequence, can be *reflexively* conscious of ourselves: we can make ourselves *as* ourselves objects of our consciousness. Fichte's claim that Spinoza's empirical subjects are conscious of themselves as selves, accordingly, seems justified.

How about the divine substance? Does God intentionally refer to objects? The answer is: there simply is no need for him to do this. Take one of the favorite examples of early modern philosophers: the idea of the sun. God's idea of the sun qua mode of thinking is – by virtue of Spinoza's identity thesis – *identical* with the sun qua bodily mode. To interpret this identity as a form of reflexive intentional reference seems possible but is neither cogent nor promising from a philosophical perspective: it is unnecessary for God intentionally to refer to the sun by means of the corresponding idea of the sun, since this idea and the corresponding bodily mode are the very same thing, taken under different attributes.

Steven Nadler in a similar context correctly indicated once that "any thinking – even infinite thinking – would have to be a thinking *of* something."[34] But it does not follow that the 'of' in question needs to be the 'of' of intentionality. Intentional reference is certainly not the only form of representational reference, as may be illustrated by Wittgenstein's theory of picturing in the *Tractatus*, or Wilfrid Sellars' conception of Janus-faced mental representations: in those conceptions the representation-relation is reduced to a merely causal relation between represented and representing.[35]

The tool of intentional reference for God is, accordingly, superfluous: finite beings need it solely because we – unlike God – are not otherwise capable of referring to bodily and mental states that are *not* our own. The states that are our own are states we could in principle represent *non-intentionally* – by virtue of the relation of identity holding between the respective bodily and mental states. Since every possible bodily or mental state is a state of God, as all those states are modifications of the infinite

[33] See E2p21s.
[34] S. Nadler, *Spinoza's Ethics: An Introduction* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), p. 90.
[35] Cf. W. Sellars, *Science and Metaphysics: Variations on Kantian Themes* (London: Routledge, 1968), Chapter 5.

substance, there is no reason for him to use this tool at all. In addition, since intentional reference is the essential characteristic of empirical consciousness – as Fichte's object-directed analysis of empirical consciousness makes clear – we can conclude that empirical consciousness for Spinoza's God is likewise superfluous.[36]

Is Fichte therefore justified in concluding that Spinoza's God *cannot* have consciousness in the sense of reflexive empirical consciousness? That does not seem to follow at this stage of the argument: if Spinoza's God should choose, he is free to do so by limitation. Spinoza's God could, as it were, partition his own mind and in this way simulate the third step of Fichte's (re-)construction of consciousness. At first glance, there seems to be no reason why God or – more accurately[37] – God's mind should not become empirically self-conscious by simply executing the third of Fichte's three steps above. That this positive assessment of the consciousness of Spinoza's God would be premature will be the burden of the last part of my argument – and Fichte's criticism contains decisive clues.

[36] The term that Spinoza seems to reserve for the *non-intentional* 'of'-ness is "indication." See E2p6c2, E2p7s, E3p4d, E4p2s, E4app Caput 2, E5p34d. The indication-relation holds in three different ways. It holds – as a non-intentional, yet still *representational* relation – between every bodily mode and the idea it is identical with (in this case it is, as it were, a relation between different kinds of viewing one and the same entity [under different attributes]). Furthermore it holds between every mode and the mode it is causally dependent on. Finally, there are indication-relations that are combinations of causal indication and indication in virtue of identity.

Only the last kind of (complex) indication-relation amounts to the *intentional* representation that is characteristic for us as finite beings. God, in contrast, is not dependent upon this kind of complex indication-relation: since God's mind is identical to every mode (E2p7s) he has no need for the composite indication-relation and hence no need for intentional representation.

Note that this interpretation allows for a differentiation between ways of representation, while all three relations are still *reducible* to a basic relation of non-intentional indication. In addition, it needs to be emphasized that mental modes do have content already in virtue of indicating the bodily mode they are identical with – but that does not make this relation intentional, as Jonathan Bennett seems to think; see J. Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1984). (Radner likewise does not consider a non-intentional relation of representation; see Radner, "Spinoza's Theory of Ideas," p. 339. Bennett and Radner, consequently, need to introduce *essentially different relations* to accommodate the various ways Spinoza talks about ideas and their content.)

Admittedly those representational relations, unlike the indication-relation, are not relations of identity. But the problem of interpreting the indication-relation as a relation of representation is shared by many interpretations of Spinoza. (For a different approach that sharply differentiates between questions of intentional content and the relation of identity, see Melamed, *Spinoza's Metaphysics*, Chapter 4.)

[37] See E2p7s; and Della Rocca, *Representation and the Mind–Body Problem*, p. 40.

THE INDISPENSABILITY OF INTELLECTUAL INTUITION

We can approach this question by taking up motivation for the quest for non-reflexive consciousness: can Spinoza's God and his pure consciousness serve as a regress-stopper in the sense required from the *Versuch*? The negative answer will be twofold: it has an *epistemic* and a *genetic* dimension.

The *epistemic* dimension can be dealt with briefly. It is connected to Spinoza's unfounded step 'too far': even if one were able to establish God's self-consciousness on the basis of his pure consciousness, it would have to be the consciousness of someone different, and hence not *our* consciousness. Thus we cannot in this way understand our own empirical consciousness in the sense required, i.e., its irreducible *de se* character.

This is the reason why a strategy to account for finite consciousness by further limiting or partitioning God's mind cannot be successful: the *de se* character of empirical consciousness, its irreducible perspectivity, is to be explained – and it cannot be explained by reference to a consciousness whose perspective is fundamentally different from our own. The partition, in other words, cannot serve as a partition of perspectives. It is not possible to tell a story sufficiently similar to Fichte's threefold construction of empirical consciousness for finite beings on the basis of a divine consciousness partitioning itself.

Still, this epistemic consideration does not threaten the possibility that God himself is able to acquire empirical consciousness. To see that Spinoza, by Fichtean standards, fails on that account as well, we have to turn to the *genetic* dimension of the question. As Fichte himself points out, God's pure consciousness cannot 'attain to consciousness,' i.e., it cannot amount to determinate self-consciousness, and the empirical consciousness that is its logical counterpart. How, on this account, could empirical consciousness be generated by means of the original *Thathandlung* and the steps following from it logically?

One can put the problem for Spinoza in the form of a dilemma: the consciousness can be the product of a complex act of self-positing and counter-positing produced by either God or an empirical subject. But, as we have seen, the empirical subjects by definition do not possess absolute existence in the sense afforded by the first *Thathandlung* of self-positing (and consequently cannot enter into the other aspects of this complex act), while God cannot go any further than the first part of this complex act and is thus *restricted* by his nature to the first *Thathandlung*.

At this point we can understand that in talking – with Spinoza – of the infinite intellect as God's mind we had already granted Spinoza something his system could not account for: we had already conceded the transition from a concept of God as *res cogitans* (see E2p1) or absolute thinking (*absolutam cogitationem*; see E1p31d), a thing one of whose attributes is thinking, to God's mind as the sum total of all modes of thinking that is Spinoza's elucidation of an infinite intellect. In other words, we conceded the transition from *natura naturans* to *natura naturata*. Only then could we argue for God's gaining empirical consciousness through limitation.

We thus tacitly assumed that pure consciousness could be equated with Spinoza's infinite intellect. But that, it turns out, was a mistake. The infinite intellect is constituted by the modes of thinking that are its part. Yet there would not be real modes of thinking – as acts of empirical consciousness – in the first place, unless God as absolute thinking could proceed from the original *Thathandlung* to the further act of absolute opposition (and only then to the act of mutual limitation). And if the modes of the infinite intellect already are acts of empirical consciousness, they cannot account for it in the way required.

The only way out,[38] it would seem, would be to deny the modes of the infinite intellect the status of acts of empirical consciousness, and ascribe only pure consciousness to it. But then the infinite intellect would be confronted with the same problem we diagnosed for absolute thinking: it could not absolutely oppose a not-self to itself. Although one therefore might be tempted to argue that the act of opposition is in the third, *synthetic* act reconciled with the original act as happening in one and the same pure consciousness, this would not exclude the consciousness from undertaking the second act of absolute opposition. This act has to be one of *absolute opposition* – not only partial opposition, as in acts of limitation – to necessitate the synthesis of the third act, to start with.

God's act of self-positing, consequently, can never amount to a *Thathandlung* in the sense required for empirical consciousness: God

[38] Not, of course, the only way for Spinoza to explain consciousness with his own resources, but the only way to satisfy Fichte's criteria. The whole argument against Spinoza takes these for granted. This reflects the hierarchical relation between metaphysical and transcendental thinking: metaphysical thinking, if meaningfully determined, ultimately has to adhere to the constraints established by transcendental philosophy. (For more on these methodological questions, see J. Haag, *Erfahrung und Gegenstand: Das Verhältnis von Sinnlichkeit und Verstand* [Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 2007], Chapter 1.) Consequently, a critique of this point against Spinoza would have to question Fichte's reconstruction of the relation between pure and empirical consciousness – as, for instance, Schelling did; see SW 4:354.

cannot gain determinate consciousness and hence cannot carry out acts of self-positing that amount to consciousness. Spinoza's God, in other words, cannot carry out a *Thathandlung* that meets the condition of accessibility: His act of self-positing could never amount to an intellectual intuition – and as a result it cannot present an explanation of empirical consciousness. Accordingly, there cannot be an explanation of empirical consciousness in Spinoza's system that satisfies Fichte's conditions.

CHAPTER 7

Fichte on freedom: the Spinozistic background

Allen Wood

Johann Gottlieb Fichte is usually regarded as a follower of Kant, and he regarded himself that way too. Above all, what Fichte thought he had learned from Kant was to affirm a radical freedom of the will, rejecting all forms of mechanistic determinism, necessitarianism, or fatalism, based on the primacy of the practical standpoint over the theoretical. But Fichte did not encounter Kant's philosophy until 1790, when he was twenty-eight years old. Although he had yet to publish anything, and his encounter with Kant's philosophy occasioned a "conversion" of sorts, he already had a set of fully formed views, and the evidence is that they had been strongly influenced by Spinoza. The earliest text published by Fichte's son Immanuel Hermann in the edition of his father's works of 1845–1846 was a short fragment, dated 1790 and given the title *Aphorisms on Religion and Deism*. The 'deistic' position it puts forward is strikingly Spinozistic. Fichte claims that there is an eternal God, whose existence and action are both necessary, out of whose thoughts the world and all the occurrences in it arise just as necessarily as the existence of the Deity itself, and hence that all human sensations, thoughts, and actions are therefore also necessary (FW 5:6–7).

We can't avoid being struck by the diametrical opposition between these necessitarian views and the later views about freedom for which Fichte is famous. The imminent change in Fichte's position also provides the occasion for reflecting on some general truths about the way one philosopher may influence another. On the one hand, the influenced philosopher may take over doctrines, either wholly or in a modified form, from the influencing philosopher. But on the other, what the influenced philosopher takes over from the influencing philosopher may not be doctrines as much as issues, dilemmas, or perplexities. And sometimes the precise and emphatic way one philosopher rejects the position of an earlier one is testimony to the depth of this second kind of influence. In such a case, the influenced philosopher may also directly borrow from the doctrines

of the influencing philosopher when it comes to the way philosophical questions are conceived, and that may be precisely what determines the contrasting answers to them. My aim in this chapter is to explore a few of the more prominent and decisive ways in which these last generalities may be illustrated by the relation between Spinoza and Fichte regarding freedom of the will.

Spinoza famously denies that there is any "absolute, or free will" (E2p48). Here he uses the term 'absolute' in the same sense in which the term 'absolute power' is used by William of Ockham when he claims that God could, *de potentia Dei absoluta*, choose to save sinners without grace.[1] This claim is misunderstood by those who take Ockham to equate "absolute" power with omnipotence. Instead, what Ockham means is that when we consider only God's power, in abstraction from his other attributes, we see that he could save without grace, though of course in fact he does not choose to do so. In the same way, in denying 'absolute will,' Spinoza means that there cannot actually exist, either in God nor in any other being, a faculty of will existing apart from the nature of the willing being and the determining causes that produce its particular volitions. For Spinoza, a *being* could be free – that is, a free cause of its own actions – when the cause of those actions lies entirely within the nature of that being (E1d7, E1p17c2). But no *faculty of will* could possibly be free, simply because it must belong to some being with a nature. Those who believe in free will, Spinoza thinks, believe in the existence of a faculty of volition that is 'absolute' in this sense – that is, a faculty existing in separation not only from external determining causes, but even from the nature of the being whose faculty it is. Spinoza denies that there is free will because he regards it as absurd to suppose that there could be such a faculty.

Following his conversion to the Kantian philosophy, Fichte is convinced that human beings have free will. But he believes this while still accepting Spinoza's characterization of what freedom of the will would have to be. And from this incongruous conjunction of views, Fichte unhesitatingly draws some quite radical conclusions. He claims that a free I must be "absolute in willing" (SE 4:26), and ascribe to itself "only a faculty [*Vermögen*]" without any determinate way in which the faculty is exercised (SE 4:38). Further, following Spinoza, Fichte holds that any *thing* necessarily has a nature from which, in conjunction with external

[1] William of Ockham, *Opera theologica*, 10 vols. (St. Bonaventure: Franciscan Institute, 1967–1986), Vol. III, pp. 452–453; Vol. VII, pp. 58.

causes, its acts follow necessarily as the effects of those causes (E1a3). Fichte therefore draws the conclusion that the I that wills cannot be a being, or a thing, at all. The I, he says, is solely an act (*ein Handeln*): "in order not to suggest the idea of a substratum that contains within itself this power of acting, I do not even want to call the I an acting something [*ein Handelndes*]" (NR 3:1; cf. SE 4:20). The act that is the I may, to be sure, be ascribed to a being: as it turns out, to a living material body (NR 3:56–61; SE 4:11, 113–122). But the act that is the I cannot be thought of as having a nature from which its free act follows as an effect follows from a cause. Even the natural drives that arise, originally unconsciously, out of the body's striving against the external world, are not to be thought of as mechanical causes that necessitate their effects. They are rather determinations of freedom: they originate not from their objects but from the activity of the I (SE 4:29, 124). The I, considered as willing, must therefore "exist in advance of its nature, so that it may determine the latter itself" (SE 4:35):

> What is free is supposed to be before it is determined; it is supposed to have an existence independent of its determinacy. This is why a thing cannot be thought of as determining itself, since it does not exist prior to its nature (i.e. the sum total of its determinations). As was just said, something that is supposed to determine itself would, in a certain respect, have to be before it is, before it has properties and any nature at all (SE 4:36).

The I does, to be sure, have a "true essence" (SE 4:24) or an "original being" (SE 4:30). But these terms do not refer to anything belonging to a system of causes expressing natural necessity. The I's original nature rather consists in a tendency, grasped in a *concept* projected by the I, expressing a *norm* of action, aiming only at absolute self-activity, or activity for activity's sake (SE 4:37). Willing itself, therefore, is "an absolutely free transition from indeterminacy to determinacy, accompanied by consciousness of this transition" (SE 4:158). "Every free decision is itself something substantial." Fichte means this last term in precisely Spinoza's sense: "it is what it is absolutely through itself" (SE 4:135; cf. E1d3).

Spinoza's conception of "absolute, or free will" also opens up for Fichte not only the possibility of a new way of thinking about the I, but even a whole new way of thinking about philosophy. Either we begin, as Spinoza does, with the concept of a *thing* (a thing existing in itself), and attempt to explain acts of consciousness and volition as the effect of the causal interaction of things; or else we begin with the concept of an act, and attempt to explain things as the transcendentally necessary counterpart

to activity. Fichte thinks these are the only two routes philosophy can take. The first route he calls 'dogmatism' or 'materialism'; the second, 'criticism' or 'idealism.'

Fichte makes a number of ambitious claims about the opposition between criticism and dogmatism that are either hard to interpret, hard to accept, hard to reconcile with one another, or all of these at once. He claims that dogmatism and criticism are the only two consistent philosophies, and that all attempts to combine them (such as the attempt he finds in Salomon Maimon) are bound to be unsuccessful (FW 1:431). He insists that Berkeley is not a true idealist because for him spirit is a kind of substance or thing (FW 1:438), but also claims that the only consistent dogmatism is materialism (FW 1:437). Fichte asserts that neither dogmatism nor criticism can refute the other, and that each must be in the end a faith or belief, based on a free choice (FW 1:432–434; cf. SE 4:26, 54). "One is unable to refute dogmatism by [a proof], no matter how clear this proof may be. For the dogmatist cannot be led to accept this proof, since he lacks the power or ability that is required in order to grasp its premises" (FW 1:439). Or again, Fichte says that the dogmatist cannot be refuted because he refuses to accept either the immediate evidence or the philosophical proofs of it, owing to a moral character that is "naturally slack, enervated, and twisted by spiritual servitude and learned self-indulgence" (FW 1:434). Dogmatism, Fichte suggests, appeals to political conservatives, since it serves to rationalize their complacent enjoyment of their unjust privileges, whereas criticism or idealism appeals to those committed to changing the world and making it a better place. Fichte also claims, however, that criticism has two decisive advantages over dogmatism. First, its first principle can be directly exhibited in consciousness; dogmatism has to reject this immediate awareness as an illusion, without being able to offer any exhibition of its own first principle (FW 1:429–435). And second, idealism can explain and justify what it needs to – namely, the commonsense conviction of a world of things outside consciousness, while dogmatism cannot explain what it needs to – namely, consciousness itself, or how something objective comes to be represented in consciousness (FW 1:435–440; cf. SE 4:1–12).

It seems misleading of Fichte to say that criticism cannot *refute* dogmatism, and perhaps more appropriate to say that although the dogmatist has been *refuted*, it may be true that, through his own fault, he might be incapable of being *convinced*. But there is reason enough for Fichte to be cautious, since his own systematic arguments on behalf of criticism seem always to have remained a project in need of completion: he never

completed the system he called the "doctrine of science" (*Wissenschaftslehre*) and therefore never actually demonstrated either that criticism can explain what it needs to or that dogmatism cannot. This leaves his claims on behalf of criticism largely dependent on the point that its principle can be "directly exhibited in consciousness," while that of dogmatism cannot. And we will see later that this "exhibition," as Fichte understands it, gives him good reason to deny that it can ever provide a final "refutation" of dogmatism.

As is well known, Fichte regards Spinoza as the greatest and most consistent of the dogmatists: "So far as dogmatism can be consistent, Spinozism is its most logical outcome" (FW 1:120). Fichte never suggests, however, that Spinoza was moved by moral slackness or a self-deceptive need to rationalize social injustice. On the contrary, Fichte always treats Spinoza's name with respect, even reverence. If he is Fichte's most direct philosophical opponent, he is always an honored opponent.

There are good reasons for this attitude. As we have noted, Fichte takes the word 'I' to designate not a thing or substance but a free act. This act has a dual directedness: it is always directed at itself – it is "self-reverting" (*in sich oder auf sich zurückgehend*); it is also directed at a not-I – a thing or material object distinct from itself. The former is required for it to be free in the Spinozist sense: namely, self-determining (E1d7). The latter is required if the I, as an object of reflection, is to be a determinate object, differentiated from other objects. This last point depends on the thesis, associated by the German Idealists especially with Spinoza: *omnis determinatio est negatio* (which comes closest to being stated at Ep. 50; cf. also E1p8s1.) Because the I must act on the not-I, and at the same time be limited by it, the subject of the act that is the I must also be something material. Fichte therefore rejects as incoherent the Cartesian conception of an immaterial thing or substance. The substantial subject of the I's action is therefore necessarily a body (SE 4:11; cf. NR 3:56–61). Fichte thus holds that the causality of the I on the external object appears, from two different sides, as will and as body (SE 4:12) – a thesis that may remind us of Schopenhauer (who obviously got this basic idea from Fichte), but that should also make us think of Spinoza's thesis that the mind and the body are the same thing conceived under different attributes (E2p21s). The I simultaneously acts on the external world and observes its own action. "In the intelligence, therefore – to speak figuratively – there is a double series, of being and seeing, of the real and the ideal; and its essence consists in the inseparability of the two" (FW 1:436).

Fichte also views his own distinction between subject (that which reflects or posits) and object (that which is reflected on or posited) as essentially the same as Spinoza's distinction between thinking and extension: "Substance [for Spinoza] is simultaneously extended and thinking … Thus the *Wissenschaftslehre* proceeds from the reflecting and the reflected … That which we call the positing, Spinoza calls the thinking; the posited, the extended" (GA IV/1:368). The difference between Fichte and Spinoza at this point is that Spinoza, as dogmatist, conceives the I – in Fichte's words – as "only an accident of the world" (FW 1:430). Fichte, as an idealist, infers the external world as a necessary counterpart to, or "check" (*Anstoß*) on, the original activity of the I. Spinoza may even be seen as anticipating the primacy of the ideal – idealism itself – in the asymmetry he attributes to the attributes of thought and extension. A mode of thinking has a mode of extension as its object, but also takes itself as object by having an idea of itself (E2p11–13, E2p21s); further, even the difference between attributes depends on the difference in the way they are perceived by the intellect (E1d4).

Many aspects of Fichte's conception of the I's embodiment are strikingly Spinozistic. For example, he takes the I's natural drives to arise from a fundamental striving (*Streben*), originally unconscious, through which the I's organic body preserves itself (FW 1:261–262, 270; cf. GA IV/1:151; SE 4:124). This striving is easily recognizable as a version, transferred into a system of freedom, of that *conatus* through which Spinoza holds that each individual strives to persist in its own being (E3p6). It is also from Spinoza that Fichte gets the idea that there is no general drive to self-preservation but only a striving to preserve the essence of the individual (SE 4:123). Only Fichte infers from this that since each human individual is free, there is originally no human essence: "Every animal is what it is; only the human being is originally nothing at all. He must become what he is to be; and since he is to be a being for himself, he must become this through himself" (NR 3:80). In every act of freedom, the I therefore "tears itself away from itself" (*reißt sich von sich selbst los*) or from its present state, and freely posits a new state (SE 4:32).

The greatest contribution of all that Spinoza makes to Fichte's conception of freedom, however, is in his account of the imagination. "It results solely from the imagination," Spinoza says, "that we regard things, both in respect of the past and the future, as contingent" (E2p44c1). The long Scholium in which Spinoza explains this proposition turns out to be decisive for Fichte's concept of freedom:

We have shown above (E2p17c) that although things may not exist, the mind nevertheless always imagines them as present unless causes arise which exclude their present existence. Further, we have shown (E2p18) that if the human body has once been affected by two external bodies at the same time, when the mind later imagines one of them, it will straightway call the other to mind as well; that is, it will regard both as present unless other causes arise which exclude their present existence. Furthermore, nobody doubts that time, too, is a product of the imagination, and arises from the fact that we see some bodies move more slowly than others, or more quickly, or with equal speed. Let us therefore suppose that yesterday a boy saw Peter first of all in the morning, Paul at noon, and Simon in the evening, and that today he again sees Peter in the morning. From E2p18 it is clear that as soon as he sees morning light, forthwith he imagines the sun traversing the same tract of sky as on the previous day, that is, he will imagine a whole day, and he will imagine Peter together with morning, Paul with midday and Simon with evening; that is, he will imagine the existence of Paul and Simon with reference to future time … This train of events will be more consistent the more frequently he sees them in that order. If it should at some time befall that on another evening he sees James instead of Simon, then the following morning he will imagine along with evening now Simon, now James, but not both together. For we are supposing that he has seen only one of them in the evening, not both at the same time. Therefore, his imagination will waver [*fluctuare*], and he will imagine, along with a future evening, now one, now the other; that is, he will regard neither of them as going to be there for certain, but both of them contingently. This wavering [*fluctuatio*] of the imagination occurs in the same way if the imagination be of things which we regard with relation to past or present time, and consequently, we shall imagine things, as related both to present and past or future time, as contingent. (E2p44c1s)

In regard to the imagination, Spinoza and Fichte agree on the following points:

(1) Imagination is necessary for the representation of time, in relation to past, present and future;
(2) Imagination represents events as contingent;
(3) Imagination represents this contingency through a wavering (*fluctuatio*, *Schweben*) of the mind between alternative possibilities.

For Spinoza, of course, temporality involves an inferior manner of representation; it is solely through this "first" or lowest kind of knowledge, not through reason or intuition, that falsity and error are possible (E2p41). The representation of things as contingent by means of the wavering of imagination thus involves the ignorance of their causes, resulting from the fragmentary or mutilated ideas of them that are derived from vagrant experience (E2p40s2). For Fichte, however, imagination is not

ignorance, but a power fundamental to all knowing and all consciousness. Temporality too is indispensable for both knowledge and agency: the difference between past and future is the difference between that which has been fixed or determined and that which is still open, involving alternative possibilities for action. The wavering of imagination between these possibilities is essential to the I's awareness of its free action, and the real alternatives between which imagination wavers are essential to the constitution of the world in which it acts.

The sheer variety of instances in which Fichte appeals to the wavering of the imagination, in both theoretical and practical philosophy, is too great to be canvassed here. But of special relevance to the issue of freedom is the way in which the wavering of imagination is essential to all theoretical operations of the mind, especially to understanding (*Verstehen*) or comprehension (*Begreifen*):

> First of all – what does it mean to *understand* or *comprehend*? It means to *posit as fixed*, to *determine*, to *delimit*. I have comprehended an appearance if, through it, I have attained a complete cognitive whole that, with respect to all its parts, is grounded in itself; i.e. if each part is grounded or explained through all the others, and *vice versa*. Only in this way is it completed or delimited. – I have not comprehended something if I am still in the midst of explaining it, if my interpretation of it is still in a *state of wavering* [*Schweben*] and therefore not yet fixed; i.e. if I am still being led from one part of my cognition to the others. (I have not yet comprehended some contingent A, if I have not thought of a cause for A, and this means – since a particular kind of contingency must belong to A – if I have not thought of a particular cause for it.) (NR 3:77)

Here Fichte contrasts the state of having understood or comprehended something with a temporally preceding state, in which one is still coming to understand or comprehend it. This preceding state is a *Schweben*, a hovering over or wavering between alternative possible judgments about what causes the object still to be comprehended, or about how a cognitive whole relates to its constituent parts. Fichte seems to be assuming that there is a determinate cause, or grounding relation, which, when comprehended, will remove this sense of contingency from the object. In that sense, the modal conceptions one might use in describing this contingency – "It is *possible* that A is caused by X, but also possible that it is caused by Y" – "No: I see now that X could not have caused it, so it *must* have been caused by Y" – are merely epistemic modalities. In particular, the contingency involved is only epistemic. The possibilities over which I hover, or between which I waver, are only epistemic possibilities: for all I know, A could have been caused by X or by Y. But once we comprehend

A, it becomes certain what caused it, and so I can no longer judge otherwise than that Y caused it.

All this, so far, would fit comfortably into Spinoza's account of imagination and its temporality as the source of contingency: if the boy in Spinoza's example came to understand precisely why Simon appeared on Monday evening and James on Tuesday evening, he would no longer think it contingent that Simon appeared on Monday and James on Tuesday. And if the boy understood things well enough, he might become equally certain that Simon must appear again on Wednesday, James on Thursday, John on Friday, and so forth, and that it is not contingent who appears on any given evening. Accordingly, Spinoza might say that once we come to understand that Y caused A, we no longer regard A as contingent, but see it as the necessary consequence of Y.

Yet there is another aspect of the wavering of imagination that Spinoza cannot account for in the same way: namely, the wavering of my mind itself, prior to the act of comprehension, between the two alternative epistemic possibilities. In order to come to comprehension, I must entertain the two epistemic possibilities as possibilities (of some future fixing, determining, or delimiting judgment) that are at this point in time still open to me to judge. Here I cannot regard the possibilities as merely epistemic, owing only to my ignorance – as though my considering it contingent which of them I judge were merely a matter of being ignorant of what my eventual judgment was already determined to be. For the process of coming to comprehend is possible only through a wavering at time t_1 between alternative possible judgments and then a fixing or settling on one of them at a later time t_2. To regard the process as one of coming to comprehend requires that both were really open to me to judge at t_1, in order that I might settle the matter by achieving comprehension at t_2. To regard the matter as having already been settled or necessitated beforehand (unbeknownst to me) at t_1 is to deny that my judgment at t_2 came about precisely through the process of my first wavering between opposed epistemic possibilities and then being settled by my fixing, determining, or delimiting the matter to one of them. Even where the possibilities in the object (for instance, possible causes of A) are merely epistemic, the possibilities between which I have to judge at t_1 must be more than epistemic. They must be real contingencies open to my free agency.

Fichte thinks the process of transforming the wavering of imagination into the fixity of understanding is essential to our coming to the justified conviction of the reality of the material world around us. "Intuition," he

says, is "fixed or stabilized by reason," so that an object can be considered one and the same in different determinations of it. Imagination then "wavers between conflicting directions," then through understanding "the transiency [of this wavering of imagination] is arrested, settled, as it were, or brought to a stand, and is rightly called *understanding*" (FW 1:232–233). Fichte cites certain philosophers (Salomon Maimon would seem to be among them) who have come to see that ordinary understanding is a result of the exercise of imagination, but have been tempted by this to consider the entire process a deception (FW 1:227, 234). Fichte insists that they must be mistaken; for that which I must represent as necessary to successfully coming to understand cannot be represented as deception. That would make understanding itself a deception, which is nonsense.

To be sure, it is always possible that some particular judgment (about the cause of A, or about the reality and the determinations of some object before me) was indeed predetermined beforehand, so that it did not come about by means of the wavering of my imagination and its fixation by understanding. But if I represent my judgment as predetermined, then I cannot also represent it as a genuine case of understanding or comprehension. And this remains so even if it resulted (even non-accidentally) in a *true* judgment about the cause of A. This is because it is a conceptual point about comprehension that the process of coming to comprehend must be essentially self-transparent: if it came about in such a way that the subject is essentially deceived about how it came about, then understanding or comprehension has not come about at all. A subject need not, of course, be conscious of every aspect of the process – for instance, of all the neuron-firings that went into it. But the subject cannot be essentially self-opaque or in error about the epistemic essentials of the process. For instance, if I were mistaken in believing at time t_1 that my judging was genuinely contingent, dependent on the course of my thinking, that it was open to me to make any of several really possible judgments about the cause of A, then the judgment I do eventually make could not possibly be a genuine case of understanding or comprehension.

Another way to think of it is this: to come to understand or comprehend is to come to judge something for a *good reason*, and to have one's judgment determined by that reason. A reason, however, has the peculiar property that although it may explain why I judge as I do, it does not do this by preventing me from judging otherwise or taking away from me the genuine possibility of judging otherwise. So a judgment made for reasons is always contingent, not merely epistemically, but really contingent.

Reasons, in other words, even the best reasons, always leave us free to act against them. This is why irrationality is possible only for rational beings, and why the truth that humans are the only irrational animals is grounded on the truth that humans are the only rational animals.

Some philosophers like to toy with the thought that all our conscious processes involve self-opacity or deception. Nietzsche, post-modernists, and neurophilosophers, for instance, sometimes enjoy titillating themselves with such incoherent thoughts. Spinoza, however, cannot follow them here. Although he may regard the self-determining knowledge of reason and intuition as both rare and difficult, he is firmly committed to their possibility, since he must regard the *Ethics* itself as recording an instance of them. No doubt we may often be deceived in thinking we understand, and our thought processes may be motivated by causal processes of which we are unaware. But there is a limit to how far we can coherently represent all human thinking as self-opaque or deceptive in this way: I cannot, for instance, represent my belief that all human thinking is self-opaque as a rational judgment to that effect if I include that very judgment within the scope of human thinking that suffers from self-opacity.

Spinoza avoids the incoherence by holding, regarding reason and intuition, that they involve comprehension of their own necessity. This works in cases of understanding that have been settled in the past. Once I have seen clearly and distinctly that 2 + 3 = 5, then as long as I retain the results of this insight as part of my beliefs, it will no longer be possible for me to believe that 2 + 3 could equal any number other than 5. It is also true of many of our beliefs that they were not arrived at directly by such a process, but were acquired along with an entire web of beliefs that was arrived at through temporal processes yet without each of them being acquired separately by such a process. Spinoza's position, therefore, might be coherent if reason and intuition are considered atemporally, as states in which the subject has always understood something, as it were, without ever needing to come to understand it. For then they might be necessitated in the same way as our standing conviction that 2 + 3 = 5.

Fichte's argument, however, is that nothing has ever been understood except through a process of coming to understand. And this temporal process is what necessitarianism cannot account for: "All our consciousness commences with indeterminacy, for it commences with the power of the imagination, which is a hovering [*schwebendes*] power wavering [*schwankendes*] between opposites" (SE 4:194). It is essential to our lives as temporal experiencers and knowers that we are confronted at every

moment with the task of achieving some new understanding, that presupposes a wavering between alternatives and a fixation on one of them.

The same is true of coming to be convinced of something. Conviction (*Überzeugung*) always arises out of a condition of doubt, a condition of worry or concern (*Besorglichkeit*) in which "the imagination continues to waver between opposites," and ending with a "feeling of harmony" or "satisfaction," through which this wavering ceases, and "the power of the imagination is now bound or compelled, as it is in the case of everything real" (SE 4:167). This is presumably why he says that "Spinoza could not have been in a state of conviction; he could only *think* his philosophy, not *believe* it, for it stood in the most immediate contradiction to his necessary conviction in daily life, whereby he was bound to regard himself as free and independent" (FW 1:513; cf. FW 1:438).

Take, for instance, the issue of free will itself: suppose I am trying to decide what position is correct on this issue – Fichtean libertarianism, Spinozist necessitarianism, or some soft-determinist position. No matter how good the arguments on the necessitarian side may be, they always arrive too late to admit the possibility of any rational conviction based on them. For in order even to entertain them as rational arguments, I must already represent myself as having a variety of possible judgments open to me, in order to be capable of deciding the question at a time and according to reasons. If I represent myself as coming to judge for reasons that my judgment is necessitated, then I thereby commit myself to the position that the judgment in question could not have been a judgment for reasons after all, or a genuine case of coming to understand or be convinced. The necessitarian position cannot be coherently combined with the thought that I have come to understand or be convinced of it.

It is important to see that the considerations just adduced do not show directly *that I am free*, or that my judgment ever actually selects, for reasons, between genuinely contingent possibilities for judging. The Fichtean arguments leave it still possible, considered abstractly in itself, that we never really come to understand or to judge for reasons at all, that all our supposed comprehension or understanding is always illusory. They show only that it belongs to the concept of coming to understand that it must involve freedom, and hence that we can never coherently represent ourselves – to ourselves, or to others – as coming to understand that we are not free (or, indeed, as coming to understand anything at all, unless we are free). This, I think, is why Fichte holds that we can never finally prove we are free and that criticism cannot ultimately refute dogmatism. The necessary representation of ourselves free is not merely a psychological

necessity; it is a *normative* necessity of coherently combining my claim that I have come to understand with a representation of the process through which I have come to understand. In Fichte's view, the task of deciding between alternatives for reasons is continually our task as knowers or intelligences, simply because it is more fundamentally our task at every moment as agents – that is, as *willing* beings. For whenever we find ourselves in reflection, Fichte argues, we always find ourselves fundamentally as *will* (SE 4:18–23). It is the *willing* I or the 'practical I' that is always the original I of self-consciousness (NR 3:20–23). And volition, as we have already seen, is, like the process of coming to understand or being convinced, a conscious transition from indeterminacy to determinacy (SE 4:137; cf. SE 4:79).

Spinoza holds that people regard their will as free, and their actions as contingent, because they are ignorant of the causes determining them to will and act as they do (E1p33s1). Fichte agrees that to think of oneself as having free will is to think of one's actions as having no cause: "What I can become conscious of, is that I am conscious of no cause for a certain voluntary determination of my empirical I other than my will itself" (FW 6:305). Idealism or criticism, he thinks, has the basic advantage over dogmatism that we consider ourselves free in this sense; the dogmatist cannot deny this fact of consciousness, but can only dismiss it as an illusion (FW 1:430–431). Fichte holds that we regard our actions as uncaused because he accepts the proposition that every cause necessitates its effect, so that if our actions were caused, they would be necessary, and it would be an illusion to think that we choose them from among several different actions that are possible for us. But Fichte also rejects the claim that the absence of a cause for our free actions entails that they are the results of mere blind chance. On the contrary, they are regarded by us as self-determined and self-determining, and this excludes mere blind chance just as certainly as it excludes causal necessitation (SE 4:33–34).

As an explanation of our "innate" conviction that we are free (Ep. 58), Spinoza claims that we hold it because we are ignorant of the causes of our actions (E1app; E2p49s). This explanation would be spectacularly unconvincing if committed to the general thesis that when I am conscious of my ignorance of the cause of something, I must regard it as having no cause at all. For example, I often put a pair of socks into the laundry, and then find that when I take the clothes out of the dryer, I have only one sock. I do not know the cause of this, and experience my ignorance as annoying and frustrating; but I have no tendency whatever to believe it has no cause. Spinoza appears not to maintain this general

thesis, however, but holds instead that it applies only to cases where we are aware of our own desire as a partial cause of our action, which we then take to be the entire cause, ignoring the causes that may determine or influence this desire itself (Ep. 58; E3p2s). But this too is unconvincing, because often we are aware of the circumstances that ground our desire, but when we regard these circumstances as reasons for those desires, we cannot coherently represent them as necessitating causes that make any other choice impossible. The Fichtean explanation for our conviction that our free actions are uncaused is based on precisely this point: that we fall into incoherence if we try to represent what we do for reasons, including the acquisition of understanding or conviction, as causally necessitated. This is why Fichte says that the dogmatist cannot consistently complete his philosophical system, and why Spinoza can only *think* his philosophy, but never truly be convinced of it.

Defenders of necessitarianism often represent defenses of free will as motivated by an attempt to save certain notions of moral responsibility, guilt, and blame. It is therefore worth noting that none of the Fichtean considerations we have just canvassed in favor of freedom depend even in the slightest degree on such an appeal. Fichte does occasionally relate our conviction that we are free to such considerations – as when he argues that we could not hold someone morally responsible for his actions if we did not judge that he ought to have acted otherwise, and we could not judge this unless we presuppose that he could have done otherwise (SE 4:62). But this is only because Fichte thinks our judgments about moral responsibility must follow our judgments about agency, and that our only coherent conception of agency requires it to be free, and agents to be able to do otherwise. The real issue is always about agency, not blame or responsibility.

Fichte's view of human freedom involves an eager embrace of the bewildering thought that human choice must be before it is – that it must exist without being anything at all. Spinoza's necessitarianism, as I have argued, is a view no one could coherently come to accept (no matter how good the arguments for it). We might regard these paradoxes as evidence that there is something profoundly confused about both philosophers. I should end, therefore, by declaring that this is not necessarily so. I think it might be possible to reconcile free will with natural causality if we allow a certain flexibility in our concept of the latter – perhaps in the form of Leibnizian causes (or reasons) that incline without necessitating, or Lockean indifferent causal powers that can be exercised in the production of any of a plurality of possible alternative effects. No

one, however, has yet provided such a reconciliation in detail. The more common and complacent forms of compatibilism are more superficial. In effect, they accept a (Spinozist) necessitarianism about causality, but propose to accommodate freedom by offering us an impoverished conception of it – saying, for instance, that it is sufficient for the truth of we 'could do otherwise' that we would do otherwise if we had different desires (in effect, if we had been necessitated by different causes). Fichte shows that this will not work, because if we are to represent ourselves as acting for reasons, we cannot represent our actions as necessitated at all. Standard compatibilism is therefore untenable.

I do not regard this as a welcome result. A sensible person naturally would prefer to reconcile our conception of ourselves as knowers and agents with our comprehension of ourselves as natural beings involved in causal processes. It is downright shameful when supernaturalist metaphysicians or religious believers seize on the insolubility of the free will problem as if it were an argument for their superstitions. The free will problem is a permanent obstacle to human self-understanding, perhaps even a final proof of the absurdity of human existence. For Jean-Paul Sartre, the true consciousness of freedom is found only in anguish. He imagined standing on a precipice and being tempted to throw himself over it just in order to make the anguish stop.[2] The last word on freedom may have been pronounced by Kant when – at the end of a discussion of it that has never satisfied anyone, not even Kant himself – he blurted out that "Freedom cannot be comprehended, nor even can insight into it be gained" (AA 4:459).

[2] J.-P. Sartre, *Being and Nothingness*, trans. H. Barnes (New York: Washington Square, 1992), p. 65.

CHAPTER 8

Spinoza in Schelling's early conception of intellectual intuition

Dalia Nassar

In his letter from February 4, 1795 to Hegel, Schelling famously proclaims that he has "become a Spinozist!" "Don't be surprised," he continues, "you will soon hear, how? For Spinoza, the world (the absolute object opposed to the subject) was everything; for me it is the *I*" (HKA 3/1:22).[1] In his previous letter to Hegel, dated January 6, 1795, Schelling relates that he is working on an "Ethic à la Spinoza." This ethic, he writes, "should present the highest principles of all philosophy, the principles in which theoretical and practical reason are unified" (HKA 3/1:17).

These letters have raised ample questions. What could Schelling mean when he describes himself as a Spinozist, and what would his project of a Spinoza-inspired ethics look like? How could Schelling avow Spinozism, as he was constructing a system that looked very much like Fichte's? How was Schelling able, on the one hand, to claim solidarity with Fichte, as he did in his January letter, and, on the other hand, to call himself a Spinozist?[2]

Although in the last twenty years there has been a growing consensus that Schelling was *never* a fully fledged Fichtean, the question remains concerning the extent of Schelling's sympathies with Spinozist ideas, and their relation to his apparent Fichtean allegiances.[3]

I would like to thank Julie Klein, Michael Della Rocca, and Michael Forster for helpful questions and insightful remarks on the topic of this chapter.

[1] All citations to Schelling's work will be to HKA and SW. I will cite SW only where HKA is not available. In both cases, I will cite the division (*Abteilung*) number, followed by '/' and then the volume and the page numbers.

[2] Thus Schelling writes, "Fichte will raise philosophy to a height, from which even most of the Kantians will become dizzy," and again, "Lucky enough, if I am one of the first to greet the new hero, Fichte, in the land of truth!" (HKA 3/1:17).

[3] By illustrating the significance of both Plato and Jacobi for the early Schelling, Birgit Sandkaulen-Bock convincingly argues that Schelling was "at no time only and exclusively a Fichtean." See B. Sandkaulen-Bock, *Ausgang vom Unbedingten: Über den Anfang in der Philosophie Schellings* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), pp. 22–23. Klaus-Jürgen Grün's study on Spinoza and Schelling similarly maintains that Schelling was not and could not have been, even at this early stage, a mere disciple of Fichte, and illustrates, in contrast to Sandkaulen-Bock, that it was Spinoza (and Spinozism) that played a formative role in Schelling's philosophical

This question becomes more striking when one observes that Schelling's familiarity with Fichte's goals and ideas is itself an issue of controversy. Although Schelling had received Fichte's *Grundlage der gesammten Wissenschaftslehre* (1794) by January, 1795, a year later he reports to Niethammer that he has not yet read the work in its entirety. Thus, in a letter from January 22, 1796, Schelling responds to Niethammer's request to write a review of the *Wissenschaftslehre* as follows: "I take your request that I review Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre* with yet greater pleasure, since I myself have not yet had enough time to truly *study* this work. The practical part of it I have not yet once read … Nevertheless I believe I have grasped the spirit of the work in general" (HKA 3/1:40). In a follow-up letter from March 23 of that year, Schelling asks Niethammer to seek another reviewer, as Schelling cannot promise to write the review by a certain date (HKA 3/1:49). Indeed, as Xavier Tilliette has shown, Schelling's 1795 work *Vom Ich als Prinzip der Philosophie* shows no evidence of familiarity with the *Grundlage*, relying, rather, on Fichte's earlier *Über den Begriff der Wissenschaftslehre* (1794).[4]

Yet Fichte, upon reading Schelling's *Vom Ich*, appears to have been pleased and describes it to Reinhold (July 2, 1795) as "a commentary on my work" (GA 3/2:294).[5] The Spinozist perspective present in it, he continues, "particularly pleases me, as Spinoza's system is the one that can most clearly explain mine" (GA 3/2:294). Reinhold, however, is not entirely in agreement with Fichte's assessment. In December, 1795 he writes to Fichte, "I had until now believed that the *pure* I … arises out of *moral laws* – not that the moral laws must be deduced from it. I remain afraid that the true sense of the moral law can be in danger, if one derives it from the *absolutely posited absolute I* … in Mr. Schelling's writing there are statements on this point" (GA 3/2:330).

development. See K.-J. Grün, *Das Erwachen der Materie: Studie über die spinozistischen Gehalte der Naturphilosophie Schellings* (Hildesheim: Olms, 1993). However, in spite of its comprehensive and detailed quality, Grün's study does not address the meaning of intellectual intuition in Schelling's early work and its relation to Spinoza. In contrast, see X. Tilliette, *Schelling: Une philosophie en devenir,* 2 vols., Vol. 1: *Le système vivant* (Vrin: Paris, 1970). Tilliette claims that in his early writings, Schelling was, "at least in intention, a Fichtean" (p. 115). Ingtraud Görland similarly argues that "it is actually not possible that Schelling broke through Fichtean philosophy and put forth his own; rather it is only a further development of Fichte's convoluted philosophy …" See I. Görland, *Die Entwicklung der Frühphilosophie Schellings in der Auseinandersetzung mit Fichte* (Frankfurt am Main: Klostermann, 1973), p. 7.

[4] Tilliette, *Schelling*, p. 73.

[5] All citations to Fichte's works are from GA. I will cite division number, followed by '/' and then volume number, followed by page number(s).

While Fichte sees in Schelling's Spinozism a means by which to interpret the *Wissenschaftslehre*, Reinhold sees the reverse – Schelling is using Fichtean ideas and terminology to interpret Spinoza. Thus, Schelling's employment of the I and his emphasis on freedom do not express a Fichtean approach, but rather a Spinozist approach that is merely using Fichtean terminology. More and more, this has become the accepted interpretation of Schelling's *Vom Ich*, with some commentators going so far as to argue that Schelling's conception of the I in this work is nothing but a "place-holder" for Spinoza's substance that bears little relation to Fichte's I.[6] Although I think this claim is not entirely unjustified, it would be a mistake to understand Schelling's I as a mere terminological substitute for Spinoza's substance. For although Schelling's description of the I has much in common with Spinoza's substance – it is an absolute indivisible unity, whose attributes are infinite, and which can best be described as "absolute power" – Schelling emphasizes, in his letters to Hegel, in *Vom Ich*, as well as in his later writings, that his starting point is the I, and not, as was the case with Spinoza, the not-I.

Thus in his February, 1795 letter to Hegel, Schelling, in spite of calling himself a Spinozist, underscores this difference. "The real difference between critical and dogmatic philosophy," he writes, "appears to lie in the fact that critical philosophy begins with the absolute I (which is not determined [*bedingt*] by an object), while dogmatism begins with the absolute object, or not-I. Dogmatism in its most consistent form leads to Spinoza's system, criticism to Kant's" (HKA 3/1:22). If, as Schelling goes on to say, "philosophy must begin with the *unconditioned*," then the only question remaining is, "where does this unconditioned lie – is it in the I or in the not-I? If this question is answered, then *everything* is decided" (HKA 3/1:22). Schelling's answer, in his early writings (*Vom Ich*, the *Philosophische Briefe*) and – though I will not cover this here – in his "identity philosophy," is that the unconditioned necessarily is the I.

Given that Schelling's notion of the absolute I so closely resembles Spinoza's substance, why does he persist in emphasizing that it is an *I* and not simply substance? The answer to this question, I think, can be found in Schelling's notion of intellectual intuition.

[6] The remarks are made by Manfred Frank and Gerhard Kurz, in their introduction to the collection of essays on Schelling's early philosophy; M. Frank and G. Kurz, "Einleitung," in *Materialien zu Schellings Philosophischen Anfangen* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 10. See also Walter Schulz's introduction to J. G. Fichte and F. W. J. Schelling, *Fichte–Schelling Briefwechsel*, introd. W. Schulz (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1975), p. 29.

Schelling speaks of intellectual intuition for the first time in *Vom Ich*. *Vom Ich* is the text that Fichte considers to be nothing more than a "commentary" on his own work, and to which Reinhold is responding in his letter to Fichte. It is also the first work in which Schelling clearly (and enthusiastically) embraces Spinoza. In *Vom Ich*, intellectual intuition plays a central, if not entirely worked-out, role. Because of this ambiguity, Schelling's understanding of intellectual intuition has often been interpreted as Fichtean.[7] However, an examination of the text reveals that a more significant source of Schelling's theory of knowledge and his concept of intellectual intuition is not Fichte, but Spinoza. Throughout *Vom Ich* Schelling references and at times defends Spinoza's theory of knowledge and notion of truth. In Spinoza's third kind of knowledge, Schelling finds precisely what he is looking for: a non-objectifying mode of knowing that would enable insight into a non-objective absolute I.

It is in Schelling's theory of intellectual intuition, however, that the difference between Schelling and Spinoza is also most clear. According to Schelling, intellectual intuition is necessarily *self*-intuition. The question that I would like to pose and consider is this: what is the significance that Schelling sees in the I, as opposed to substance, and why does he emphatically underscore this difference between himself and Spinoza? The answer to this question will not only illustrate the differences between Schelling and Spinoza but also enable us better to understand the direction of Schelling's thought after 1795.

I will proceed as follows. In the first section I provide a brief enumeration of Schelling and Fichte's conceptions of the I. In the second I outline their differing understandings of intellectual intuition, as developed up until 1795. I then examine Schelling's references to Spinoza's third kind of knowledge and argue that it is the same conception of intellectual intuition that Schelling is employing in *Vom Ich*. In the third and final section, I consider the ontological dimension of intellectual intuition

[7] Thus Xavier Tilliette writes, "the writing *Vom Ich* not only tolerates a Fichtean interpretation, it demands it"; see X. Tilliette, "Erste Fichte-Rezeption: Mit besonderer Berücksichtigung der intellektuellen Anschauung," in K. Hammacher (ed.), *Der Transzendentale Gedanke: Die gegenwärtige Darstellung der Philosophie Fichtes* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1981), pp. 532–545 (p. 536). Tilliette's more recent work on intellectual intuition recognizes the fundamental differences in Schelling and Fichte's accounts, stating that had they actually read each other's works attentively, they might have recognized this difference themselves. See X. Tilliette, *Recherches sur l'intuition intellectuelle de Kant à Hegel* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), p. 57. In turn, Tilliette comes to place more significance on Spinoza's notion of intellectual intuition (the third kind of knowledge, the intellectual love of God) as an influence on *Vom Ich*; however, Tilliette's interpretation emphasizes – too much I think – the sense of intellectual intuition as a "quiet bliss ['stille Wonne' – Schelling]," a giving over of oneself to the absolute (Tilliette, *L'intuition intellectuelle*, p. 58).

in Schelling's thought, and elaborate how this differentiates him from Spinoza. I have chosen to focus entirely on *Vom Ich* because it is the text in which Schelling's affinities with and differences from Spinoza are, I believe, most clear.

At the end of 1794, Schelling sends his friend Pfister a copy of *Über die Möglichkeit einer Form der Philosophie überhaupt* (*On the Possibility of a Form of Philosophy as Such*; 1794) with a dedication, in which he quotes and comments upon Spinoza: "'*Quid idea vera clarius dari potest, quod norma sit veritatis! Sane sicut lux se ipsam et tenebras manifestat, sic veritas norma sui et falsi est*.' ['What can be more clear and certain than this idea, as a norm of truth? Indeed, as light makes manifest both itself and darkness, so is truth the norm of itself and of falsehood.'] What can surpass the quiet bliss of these words, the *hen kai pan* of a better life?"[8] This same quotation and Schelling's commentary on it are repeated in a note in *Vom Ich* (HKA 1/2:111G).

Spinoza's presence is evident throughout *Vom Ich*, and Schelling is aware of this. In the very first paragraph of the Preface, he comments that "in this essay Spinoza is spoken of very often, not (to use Lessing's expression) 'as a dead dog.'" For this reason, he remarks, readers who are not careful "could jump to the conclusion that the author is trying to repeat Spinoza's errors, even though they have been refuted long ago" (p. 69). To these readers, he continues, "this system is meant fundamentally to undermine Spinoza's system [*in seinem Fundament zu untergraben*], or, more aptly, to topple it by means of its own principles" (p. 70).

Schelling begins *Vom Ich* with strong realist claims, stating that the task of philosophy is, following Jacobi, "to uncover and reveal existence [*Daseyn*]" (p. 77). This is not to undercut the goal expressed in the work's title, which is to grasp the "principle of philosophy," and, by extension, the principle of knowledge. Rather, as Schelling sees it, the principle of philosophy and knowledge must be the same principle that underlies reality and being. This principle, he elaborates, cannot be objective, i.e., "determined by an ulterior principle" because, as the ultimate principle, it must be absolutely undetermined (p. 74). In response to those who criticized *Über die Möglichkeit* as attempting to establish the unity (and hence possibility) of knowledge through an objective principle, Schelling agrees that "an objective principle could not be an ultimate one because it would have to be determined by an ulterior one. The only unresolved question between us is whether there is

[8] Editorischer Bericht, HKA 1/1:254.

any principle that is not objective at all and that nevertheless furnishes the basis for all philosophy." If "the ultimate in knowledge [*der letzte in unserm Wissen*]," Schelling continues, were "a silent painting (as Spinoza put it) outside us, then we would never know *that* we know." The very fact "*that* we know" implies that this unconditioned must be "in our knowledge, such that through it we know *that* we know" (p. 74).

These claims may appear to bring Schelling's project very close to Fichte's and Reinhold's, the goal of which was to establish the unity of consciousness and overcome the infinite regress of skepticism. However, Schelling sees a fundamental difference between what he's doing and what Reinhold and Fichte had thus far accomplished. Reinhold's attempt, he writes, "to elevate the empirically conditioned I (which exists in consciousness) to the principle of philosophy," was bound to fail because it raised the empirical or conditioned to the level of the unconditioned (pp. 98–99). In other words, it took something that was objective and determined to be something non-objective and non-determinable. It is precisely this same critique that Schelling levels against Fichte, albeit silently.

The unconditioned principle of all knowledge must therefore be different from what we think of as the I, i.e., the I given in experience, the self-conscious I. Nevertheless, as the condition of all knowledge, this principle cannot be outside or other than the I. Yet, if knowledge is to claim any reality – if, as Schelling puts it, "he who wants to know something, wants to know at the same time that what he knows is real" – then:

> there must be something which and through which everything that is reaches existence [*Daseyn*], everything that is being thought reaches reality [*Realität*] and thought itself reaches the form of unity and immutability. This something should be what completes all insights within the whole system of knowledge and it should reign – in the entire cosmos of our knowledge – as the original ground [*Urgrund*] of all reality. (p. 85)

In other words, the non-objective principle of knowledge must be, on the one hand, immediately united to the I, and, on the other hand, the ground of all reality.

What we are after then is not the ground of knowledge in the sense of a principle that unifies consciousness, a principle that grants coherence to the self's experience; rather, what we are after is that which makes this principle possible, i.e., not simply the condition of self-knowledge and self-consciousness, but that which enables knowledge as such. Such a ground or condition (*Bedingung*) can only be found in an absolutely unconditioned reality, a reality that precedes subject-object determination – what

Schelling terms being (*Seyn*). "The ultimate ground of reality is a something [*Etwas*], which is thinkable only through itself, through its being; briefly, it is that principle in which thought and being are one [*bey dem das Prinzip des Seyns und des Denkens zusammenfällt*]" (p.86).

As unconditioned, Schelling continues, this principle must "bring itself forth through its thought …" (p. 87). This distinguishes it from an object, which can never realize itself, but is realized through another. In turn, just as an object is determined through its being a non-subject, so also a subject is determined in its opposition to an object. For this reason, the ultimate principle must be distinguished from both object and subject. "That which I call subject is only in *opposition*, and is determined *in reference* to an already posited *object*" (p. 88). The principle of knowledge and reality, Schelling concludes, must therefore "lie in that which cannot become a thing at all," in an absolute self, or I (p. 90).

In some ways, Schelling's designation of the ground of knowledge as an absolute I that realizes itself appears to be in agreement with Fichte's understanding of the self. Indeed, it would be a mistake to deny that Schelling's emphasis on the I places him in proximity to Fichte. However, Schelling's understanding of the I also differs from Fichte's in key respects. While Fichte speaks of the "idea of the I," wherein the term "idea" implies a regulative idea or an unattainable ideal that grounds the demands of practical reason, Schelling understands the I as the constitutive ground of *reality*, and as the original and harmonious unity of being and knowing. For Schelling, therefore, the term "idea" is much more Platonist than Kantian.[9] In turn, the transcendental structures of thought and the practical demands of reason, which are at the foreground of Fichte's conception of the I, play little to no role in Schelling's conception. For Schelling the I is an ontological reality that, he repeatedly emphasizes, *is*. Fichte's central claim in *Über den Begriff* that, "I am because I am," or simply, "I am!," is interpreted by Schelling to mean "a being [*Seyn*] that precedes all thinking and imagining" (p. 90).

Furthermore, Schelling argues that self-consciousness cannot be a fact or an act of the absolute I. An I that is given through the activity of self-consciousness is a *determined* I, and thus, in Schelling's terminology, an *empirical* I.[10] For self-consciousness implies difference and determination, a subject-object distinction. Schelling thus writes that

[9] On the Platonist tendencies in Schelling's early thought, especially his *Timaeus*-Fragment, see Sandkaulen-Bock, *Ausgang vom Unbedingten*.

[10] Schelling understands "empirical" to mean anything that is or can be made into an object.

"self-consciousness presupposes the danger of losing the I; it is not a *free* act of the unchanging I, but an unfree striving of the changing *I*, conditioned by the not-I, to maintain its identity and to reassert itself in the flux of change" (p. 104). Although, in the third part of the *Grundlage*, Fichte states that "the concern here is not with the self given in actual consciousness," Schelling nevertheless sees Fichte's conception of the self – as a self that is opposed to a not-self – as a conditioned, objectifiable, and hence empirical self (GA 1/2:277). Only a self that is absolutely non-objective and non-objectifiable, Schelling contends, transcends the realm of the empirical (HKA 1/2:90).

Before characterizing the absolute I in a positive sense Schelling claims that it can only be grasped through intellectual intuition. The I cannot be given through a concept, for concepts reside within the sphere of the conditioned. If the I were merely a concept, it could be explained through something higher than itself. Therefore, the I can be given only through an intuition, specifically an intellectual intuition (*intellektuale Anschauung*), "which grasps no object at all and is in no way a sensation" (p. 106).

Although Reinhold and Fichte had already brought intellectual intuition back into philosophical discussion, Schelling's emphasis on it, and his particular understanding of it, not only distinguish him from them, but also make for a striking return of an idea that had been buried by Kant.[11] Fichte's only public mention of intellectual intuition at this point was in the "*Aenesidemus* Review" of 1794, with which Schelling was familiar.[12] However, Fichte does not speak of intellectual intuition in either *Über den Begriff* or the *Grundlage*, making it even more striking that Schelling grants intellectual intuition such prominence in *Vom Ich*. It was not until the 1797 "First Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*" that Fichte placed intellectual intuition at the centre of his understanding of the I. This is not to say that Fichte had not been working with and exploring the idea of intellectual intuition in his private writings, and, as has been more recently discovered, in his Zürich

[11] For a discussion of Reinhold's theory of intellectual intuition, see J. Stolzenberg, *Fichtes Begriff der intellektuellen Anschauung: Die Entwicklung in den Wissenschaftslehren von 1793/94 bis 1801/02* (Stuttgart: Klett–Cotta, 1986), pp. 40–56.

[12] For Fichte's encounter with *Aenesidemus* and the transformation in Fichte's attitude toward Kant and Reinhold on account of it, see D. Breazeale, "Fichte's *Aenesidemus* Review and the Transformation of German Idealism," *Review of Metaphysics* 34/3 (1981), 545–568. The full title of the work to which Fichte was responding is: *Aenesidemus; or, Concerning the Foundations of the Elementary Philosophy Propounded in Jena by Professor Reinhold, Including a Defence of Scepticism against the Pretensions of the Critique of Pure Reason*.

lectures.[13] Nevertheless, the claim that Fichte's understanding of intellectual intuition played a determining role in Schelling's conception is not only an overestimation of Fichte's influence on Schelling, but also overlooks the fundamental differences in their conceptions and uses of the term.

Fichte's understanding of intellectual intuition in the early 1790s (primarily as evidenced in the unpublished *Eigene Meditationen* [1793–1794]) was influenced by Reinhold's conception of intellectual intuition as an "inner intuition" or "inner experience," which, Fichte came to realize, does nothing more than grant an empirical unity of consciousness and thus cannot provide an adequate refutation of *Aenesidemus'* skepticism.[14]

Fichte's attempts to resolve the problems of Reinhold's theory lead him to replace Reinhold's "powers of representation" with a non-empirical self, proclaiming in the *Eigene Meditationen* that "the I is intuitable" ("Das Ich ist anschaulich"), and telling the reader to "Intuit your I" ("Schaue Deine Ich an"; GA 2/3:27). However, unlike Schelling, for whom the I cannot be opposed to a not-I (and thus determined and objectified), for Fichte the activity of self-presentation, or intellectual intuition, implies the simultaneous positing of the I and not-I.[15] Such a positing, Fichte writes,

[13] I want to thank David W. Wood for pointing me to the recently discovered lecture notes (in 1996) and Fichte's mention of intellectual intuition in them. See *Zürich Wissenschaftslehre* (GA 4/3:19–41).

[14] Toward the beginning of the notes, Fichte already exhibits a skepticism regarding Reinhold's theory, and reframes intellectual intuition in terms of thought, rather than the powers of representation. He thus writes: "The forms of the powers of representation, about which we are speaking, are intuited purely intellectually. However, this intellectual intuition is in part based on previous expressions of spontaneity, of thought; if it has not been correctly thought out, the intuition is also mistakenly eliminated" ("Die Formen des Vorstellungsvermögens, von dem eben die Rede ist, werden rein intellektuell angeschaut. – Aber diese intellectuelle Anschauung gründet sich zum Theil doch erst wieder auf vorhergegangene Aeußerung der Spontaneität, des Denkens: ist nicht richtig gedacht worden, so wird auch die Anschauung unrichtig ausfallen"; GA 2/3:24). See also Stolzenberg, *Fichtes Begriff der intellektuellen Anschauung*, pp. 55–56. According to Stolzenberg, Reinhold's conception of intellectual intuition amounted to an inherent circularity – on the one hand, Reinhold understood intellectual intuition to be the immediate access to powers of representation; on the other hand, these forms of representation are themselves represented and thus have a discursive or mediate character as well (pp. 60–61). See also D. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (Albany: SUNY, 1996), pp. 43–44.

[15] Fichte writes: "Explanation. 'Differentiation' happens here; but this is by no means understood as a differentiation through concepts, rather only through intuition. An intuition A – another Not-A. That that is possible, is confirmed through intuition itself. Furthermore, the Not-I is not differentiated from the I through concepts, but immediately through intuition" ("Erklärung. Es kommt hier 'unterscheiden' vor: damit wird aber keineswegs ein Unterscheiden durch Begriffe, sondern bloß durch die Anschauung verstanden. Eine Anschauung A. – eine andere Nicht-A. Daß das möglich ist, ist durch die Anschauung selbst zu bestätigen. – Ferner wird Nicht-Ich vom Ich auch nicht durch Begriffe, sondern unmittelbar durch die Anschauung unterschieden"; GA 2/3:28).

cannot take place "through concepts, but immediately through intuition" (GA 2/3:28). Toward the end of the *Eigene Meditationen*, Fichte comes to identify the activity of positing with practical activity: "It is practical, self-legislating, and to that extent entirely determined through itself: it itself *determines* and determines *itself*. It is at once actor and that which is acted upon" (GA 2/3:176).[16]

In the "*Aenesidemus* Review," Fichte's use of the term "intellectual intuition," though not thematized to a great extent, exemplifies the direction of his thought in the *Eigene Meditationen*, once again connecting intellectual intuition with practical activity and the moral law (GA 1/2:55–56). By bringing the I and intellectual intuition into the realm of practical reason, Fichte develops a conception of the self or the pure I as non-empirical. The moral self, he argues, is absolutely autonomous and does not have any relation to the natural world, or the world of (empirical) activity.

Schelling's motivations to turn to intellectual intuition are similar to Fichte's: like Fichte, he is attempting to work out a theory of the self that is not empirical and that evades the infinite regress of conceptual or discursive knowledge. Also like Fichte, Schelling sees himself as working with the spirit, if not the letter, of Kantian philosophy. In fact, both Schelling and Fichte understand their projects as fundamentally in agreement with Kant's, while aware of its shortcomings. However, their approaches to Kant's shortcomings are decisively different. Unlike Fichte, Schelling maintains that intellectual intuition does not involve differentiation between the I and not-I. Furthermore, Schelling does not turn to morality to secure a non-empirical conception of the I.

Schelling is in complete agreement with Kant's assertion that the I cannot be conceptualized or given through sensible intuition.[17] According to Schelling, although Kant never speaks of an "I am," but only of an "I think," he nevertheless intimates the idea of an absolute I. Thus, Schelling writes, Kant appears to suggest that "a deduction of the I from

[16] See Stolzenberg, *Fichtes Begriff der intellektuellen Anschauung*, p. 154: "This thus shows that Kant's theory of the consciousness of the moral law as consciousness of freedom is the paradigm for Fichte's concept of the self and … also the paradigm for the previously developed conception of the I."

[17] Schelling's agreement with Kant that the absolute I cannot be objectified persisted throughout his career. He thus writes in 1805: "In no kind of insight of knowledge can God be in the condition of what is known, what is an object; as an objectified entity he ceases to be *God*. We are never outside God so that we could set him before us as an object" (SW 7:150, no. 52). Many years later he repeats the same sentiment: "God is, as it were, inflicted on consciousness in its very origin, or: God is *in* our consciousness, in the sense in which we say of a man that a virtue is in him, or more often yet a vice, meaning that it is not objective for him, it is not something he wants, nor even something he knows" (SW 11:186).

mere concepts is impossible … [because] the original proposition *I am* is antecedent to all concepts and only accompanies and establishes them, as it were, as a vehicle" (HKA 1/2:133). In this distinction between the empirical I given through concepts and the absolute undetermined I, Schelling sees not only the most important philosophical contribution toward understanding the I, but also the determining characteristic of criticism (as opposed to dogmatism). Thus, he writes, "Kant was the first who established the absolute I as the ultimate substrate of all being and all identity – though he established it nowhere directly but everywhere indirectly" (p. 162). However, although Kant makes gestures toward the priority of an original I am, and appears to have a sense for the difference between the "I am" and the "I think," he does not follow through on his point. This lack of follow-through is also exhibited, Schelling argues, in Kant's denial of intellectual intuition.

To Schelling, as to many of his contemporaries, Kant's denial appeared arbitrary, and disingenuous.[18] On the one hand, Kant rejects intellectual intuition; on the other hand, he presupposes an absolute I throughout. Schelling writes,

> I know very well that Kant denies all intellectual intuition, but I also know the context in which he denied it. It was in an investigation that only *presupposes* the *absolute* I at every step and that, on the basis of presupposed higher principles, determines only the empirical conditioned I and the not-I in its synthesis with that I. (p. 106)

In other words, Kant (for particular reasons) does not allow for intellectual intuition, although, if he were consistent, he should.

The relation between the original I am and intellectual intuition, according to Schelling, is a relation of determination (p. 103). The absolute I, he writes, is given or determined (*bestimmt*) through intellectual intuition (p. 106). What does it mean for the absolute I to be *determined* through intellectual intuition? Schelling's statement appears at first sight to be contradictory. How could the absolute, which he claims to be unconditioned, be determined? In turn, what would such a

[18] Goethe levels this critique against Kant in his essay "Anschauende Urteilskraft" ("Intuitive Judgment"; 1817, published 1820), noting that although in his theoretical philosophy Kant restricts the human capacity to know the supersensible, in his moral philosophy, he requires that the human being enter into precisely that realm (HA 13:31). Novalis similarly criticizes Kant's restrictions as haphazard, writing that "the most arbitrary prejudice of them all is that man is denied the capacity to get outside himself and to have consciousness beyond the realm of the senses. At any moment man can become a supersensible being. Without this capacity he would not be a cosmopolitan but an animal" (Novalis, *Schriften*, ed. P. Kluckhohn and R. Samuel, 4 vols., Vol. II: *Das philosophische Werk* I [Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1981], p. 421, no. 22).

determination look like if, as Schelling maintains, intellectual intuition is non-objectifying?

Though Schelling does not take up these questions directly, he does provide clues as to how intellectual intuition functions, and how it determines the absolute I. The majority of these clues refer, perhaps unsurprisingly, to Spinoza.

Schelling's interest in Spinoza is based on what he takes to be Spinoza's non-abstract understanding of substance. "The most consistent system of dogmatism, the Spinozistic," he writes, "declares itself most emphatically against the opinion that conceives of the one absolute substance as of an *ens rationis*, an abstract concept." Rather, Schelling continues, "Spinoza sees the unconditional in the absolute not-I, but not in an abstract concept nor in the idea of the world, nor of course in any single existing thing. On the contrary he inveighs vehemently … against it" (p. 109). At this point, Schelling provides a lengthy footnote on Spinoza's theory of knowledge.

The footnote commences with various references to Jacobi, E2p40s, and Spinoza's letter to Ludovicus Meyer from April 20, 1663 (Letter 12). In these places, Spinoza outlines a distinction between what he calls "universal concepts," and intuitive knowledge. While the former are gained through sense perception, imagination, and abstraction, the latter is gained by way of the intellect alone. Schelling explains the distinction as follows:

> In order to understand this passage, one must know that Spinoza thought that abstract concepts were pure products of the power of imagination. He says that the transcendental expressions (which are what he calls expressions like *ens*, *res*, etc.) arise from the fact that the body is capable of absorbing only a limited quantity of impressions, and when it is oversaturated the soul cannot imagine them except in a confused manner, without any differentiation, all under one attribute. He explains the general concepts in the same manner, e.g., man, animal, etc. … For Spinoza the lowest level of knowledge is the imagining of single things; the highest is pure intellectual intuition of the infinite attributes of the absolute substance [*reine intellectuale Anschauung der unendlichen Attribute der absoluten Substanz*], and the resulting adequate knowledge of the essence of things. This is the highest point of his system. For him, mere confused imagination is the source of all error, but the intellectual intuition of God is the source of all truth and perfection in the broadest sense of the word. (pp. 110–111G)

In Spinoza's conception of intellectual intuition, Schelling finds two significant features. The first is that it is neither objectifying nor discursive. It does not proceed from an object to form a universal, abstract concept

that can in turn be applied to various instances. The second feature is that it provides adequate or true knowledge, whose standard is itself. This means that it does not fall into the infinite regress of discursive knowledge. Let us examine these two characteristics.

Spinoza's third kind of knowledge, as stated in E2p40s2, proceeds from an adequate idea of the absolute essence of certain attributes of God to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things. To explain the procedure, Spinoza provides a mathematical example in which one is given three numbers and is required to find the fourth number (1, 1, 2, …). The relations between the first three numbers exhibit the pattern according to which the fourth number must be related to the first three. In this case, one cannot, as would be the case with universal or abstract concepts, proceed from the particular to the universal, from various instances to a general concept. Rather, one must decipher the relations as exhibited *in and through* the numbers.[19]

The mathematical problem, Spinoza notes, could be resolved in a non-intuitive, mediated, or procedural way – for example, by multiplying the second and the third numbers, and then dividing them by the

[19] Although Schelling does not explicitly distinguish between imagination (first kind of knowledge), reason (second kind of knowledge), and intuition (third kind of knowledge), and instead focuses on distinguishing between imagination and intuition, his claims concerning abstraction and universal concepts pertain to the second kind of knowledge as well. For Spinoza, as for Schelling, the second kind of knowledge is unable to yield insight into the connections within reality and the eternal essence of substance. While the first kind of knowledge is based on what is given to the body, and is thus highly subjective and arbitrary (the connections it reveals are based on personal experience), the second kind of knowledge provides insight into nature as lawfully connected. This knowledge, however, remains, like the imagination, on the level of abstraction. In other words, it is concerned with universals (concepts) and not with what is real or actual, i.e., with existence, with substance. This means that reason does not gain insight into singular things, but only into abstract concepts. Furthermore, reason does not grasp things as manifestations or particular expressions of reality or substance. Finally, reason conceives nature in terms of abstract connections, i.e., connections between parts, not connections within a whole, or substance, in which all the parts and events are immanently involved. It is only through intuition that insight into substance is granted, because it is only intuition that can grasp the indivisible unity and wholeness of substance in and through the parts (in and through the relations between the numbers). Reason, in contrast, divides, conceiving things as parts, rather than as manifestations or singular expressions of one unified and indivisible substance. This point is made especially clear in Spinoza's letter to Ludovicus Meyer (which Schelling cites), where he distinguishes between intellection (i.e., intuition) and other modes of knowledge. It is only in intuition, he maintains, that substance is grasped as "infinite, unique, and indivisible." Ultimately, while intuition is able to grasp the real, singular, and unique, reason remains on the level of universals and thus, like the imagination, does not achieve the level of knowledge necessary for comprehending substance and its singular manifestations. For a comprehensive discussion of these differences and their relation to substance and eternity, see J. R. Klein, "'By Eternity I Understand': Eternity According to Spinoza," *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 51 (2002), 295–324, esp. pp. 306–308.

first. However, it could also be resolved intuitively, which means, I think, through an unmediated insight into the *relations* of the numbers (the idea).[20] The intuitive mathematician, in other words, sees the idea that underlies and determines the numbers *in and through* the numbers and their relations. The idea, therefore, is not an abstraction, but is immanently realized in the numerical relations, and the numbers are singular manifestations of the idea. Through this insight, the numbers become meaningful and further construction is possible.

Schelling identifies this unmediated insight with what Spinoza calls seeing "with the eyes of the mind." The context of this remark is the eternal nature of the absolute in *Ethics*, Book 5. In E5p23s, Spinoza considers the question of understanding eternity.

> *Eternity cannot be defined by time, or have any relationship to it*. Nevertheless we feel and know by experience that we are *eternal*. For the mind is no less sensible of those things that it *conceives through intelligence* than of those that it remembers, for *the eyes of the mind by which it sees and observes things are demonstrations*. Although therefore we do not recollect that we existed before the *body*, we *feel* that our mind, insofar as it *involves the essence of the body under the form of eternity, is eternal, and that this existence of the mind cannot be defined by time, i.e., explained through duration* (pp. 131–132R; Schelling's emphases)

What captures Schelling's attention in this passage (and what he italicizes) is the idea that the mind has an *immediate* capacity for perception and demonstration through which insight into what is eternal, into what cannot be given through either sensation or concepts, can be gained. This insight, Schelling writes, is none other than the "pure form of intellectual intuition" ("*Form reiner intellektualer Anschauung*"; p. 131).

In the first footnote in which he speaks of Spinoza's conception of intellectual intuition, Schelling also cites E2p43s, which references E2p21s. In this Scholium, Spinoza identifies the form of the mind as such, i.e., without any determination by an object of thought. The "idea of the mind," he begins, is the same as the mind, because they are "considered under the same attribute, namely thought." The idea of the mind is therefore an idea of an idea, which, Spinoza continues, means that the two are "nothing but the form of the idea considered as a mode of thought *without any relation to any object*" (my emphasis). Thus Spinoza identifies the mind as a mode of

[20] It is important to recognize the various uses of the word "idea" that Schelling is making. On the one hand, he is careful to say that the absolute I is not an idea in the Kantian sense – for the I is "absolutely immanent" and thus constitutive (HKA 1/2:133). On the other hand, Schelling makes use of Spinoza's ontological understanding of the idea as the manifestation of truth. It is in this second sense that one can understand Schelling's conception of the absolute I.

thought as such, i.e., without relation to an object of thought, without any determination. Significantly, Spinoza adds that "as soon as someone knows something, by that very fact he knows that he knows it, and at the same time he knows that he knows that he knows, and so on to infinity. But more on this later." This "later" is E2p43s, which Schelling cites. However, before proceeding to that passage, it is important to emphasize that Spinoza (and Schelling's reading of Spinoza) is aware of the infinite regress that can strike thought if it is understood only in terms of what it thinks, i.e., in terms of the object of thought. Thus, the mind as an ideal reality (the idea of the mind and the mind thought under the attribute of thought), is to be understood, first and foremost, not as a thinking thing, in relation to objects of knowledge, but, as Schelling repeatedly states, simply as I am.

E2p43 is dedicated to identifying true knowledge. "Someone who has a true idea," Spinoza begins, "knows at the same time that he has a true idea, and cannot doubt about the truth of the matter." In the Scholium to this proposition, he recalls the problem mentioned at the end of the Scholium to Proposition 21. The problem of infinite regress, Spinoza writes, is easily solved in terms of the proposition just given, "for no one who has a true idea is ignorant of the fact that a true idea involves the highest certainty." In other words, with true ideas or true knowledge, the infinite regress must come to an end. For truth, as Spinoza goes on to say, is its own standard and need not be grounded in something other than itself. He thus concludes: "who can know that he is certain of some thing, unless he is first certain of that thing? Then, what can exist which is clearer and more certain as a standard of truth than a true idea? Clearly, just as light manifests both itself and darkness, so truth is the standard of both itself and of falsity."

These remarks, which were favored by Schelling (as noted above, he quotes them in his dedication to his friend Pfister), provide an important insight into what Schelling saw in Spinoza's theory of knowledge, and how he attempted to employ it. Let us consider this in some detail.

Following his elaboration of the difference Spinoza draws between abstract or universal concepts and knowledge granted through intellectual intuition, Schelling turns to the meaning of true knowledge. The two are clearly connected. In providing an insight into the idea that determines and is expressed in the parts, intuition does nothing less than uncover the schema of construction, the inner structure that underlies and relates the parts, and thus enables further construction. Spinoza's statement that truth is the only standard of truth, which is a response to the question that he'd posed earlier regarding the infinite regress of knowledge, means

that the problem of regress can only be solved through a kind of knowledge that does not seek the cause or the reason of the thing known in something other than itself. In other words, true knowledge seeks the idea of the thing in the thing – as it is expressed *in and through* the numbers and their relations. This knowledge is intellectual intuition, which gains insight into the idea that underlies and constitutes the thing and thus evades the course of discursive knowledge.

The mark of intuitive knowledge is precisely that it does not concern itself with distinguishing and delimiting (which is the method of reason[21]), but rather with seeing the underlying whole or idea that is in each of the parts. Thus, Schelling explains that in judging A = B, one is not

> making a judgment regarding A insofar as it is determined by something *outside* itself but only insofar as it is determined by itself, by the unity of being posited in the I, not as a determined *object*, but as reality as such, as at all positable in the I. Thus I do not judge this or that A or that particular point of space or time, but A as such inasmuch as it is A through the very determination by which it is A, that is, that which makes it equal to itself and = B. (HKA 1/2:149)

In other words, intuitive insight perceives A not as a thing that exists in the way that objects exist, but as a unified being whose unity is posited in and granted through the I. Thus, A expresses itself as A only insofar as it also expresses or manifests the unity of the I, the underlying idea, substance, "reality as such." The distinction that Schelling wants to draw here, between reality or being, on the one hand, and things, on the other, is one that, he notes, is present in most languages that distinguish between being (*Seyn*) existing (*Daseyn*), actuality (*Wirklichkeit*), and existence (*Existenz*). The absolute I *is* in the sense of being; it does not exist (*existiert*), nor is it actual (*ist nicht wirklich*) (p. 137). What is perceived in intellectual intuition is precisely this non-objective reality that underlies, determines, and unifies all things.

With this in mind we can return to the question concerning determination. Given that the absolute I is non-objectifiable, how can Schelling maintain that it is "determined" through intellectual intuition? Following Spinoza, Schelling's claim is that what is perceived in intellectual intuition is the idea that underlies and constitutes reality. This perception must be absolutely non-objective. This means, first, that intellectual intuition does not perceive a thing, determined by other things, but sees it as a manifestation or an instance of an idea, the absolute I. Thus, Schelling writes, "The

[21] See n. 19 above.

I contains *all being*, *all reality* ['enthält *alles Seyn*, *alle Realität*']" (p. 111), adding, "we are talking here about the *absolute* I, this should be the genus [*Inbegriff*] of all reality, and all reality must coincide with it, that is, must be *its* reality. The absolute I must contain the data, the absolute content that determines all being, all possible reality" (p. 112). As the genus of all reality, the absolute I presents itself in its various determinations, and each of these determinations presents the absolute I within itself.

However, if intellectual intuition is truly non-objective, then there cannot be any difference or objectification between the knower and the known. Thus, what is intuited has to be identified with the intuiter in such a way that neither can be reduced to an object – or a subject. Put differently, what is intuiting the absolute I must be nothing other than the absolute I. Thus, the determination of the I in intellectual intuition can only be understood as a *self*-determination, or what Schelling calls "self-attained intuition" ("*selbsterrungenes Anschauen*"). Here, I think, we find the fundamental difference between Schelling and Spinoza, and begin to see why Schelling adamantly distinguishes his absolute I from Spinoza's substance.

Schelling's conception of the absolute I as an immanent cause, an "absolute power," sounds very much like Spinoza's *causa sui*. In fact, Schelling calls Spinoza's absolute power the "most sublime idea in Spinoza's system," and to some extent identifies it with the absolute I. According to Schelling, the absolute I acts only according to the laws of its own being. It exists outside the realm of morality, for morality and any final purpose (*Endzweck*) presuppose limitation and finitude (p. 123). The moral law, he maintains, obtains for the finite I alone, whose goal is nothing other than to become "absolutely identical with [it]self" (p. 126). For the infinite I, who is already absolutely identical with itself, there is no law higher than the law of (its) being.[22]

The elimination of morality and purposiveness from the realm of the absolute I, the claim that the law of nature is the highest and only law for the absolute I, brings Schelling's conception of the I very close to Spinoza's *causa sui*. Yet, in spite of these similarities, Schelling draws a line, and distinguishes the absolute I from Spinoza's substance.

[22] Schelling thus conclusively remarks: "From these deductions it becomes clear that the causality of the *infinite* I cannot be represented at all as morality, wisdom, and the like, but only as absolute power that fills the entire infinity … Therefore the moral law, even in its entire bearing on the world of sense, can have meaning and significance only in its relation to a higher law of *being*, which, in contrast to the law of freedom, can be called the law of nature." (HKA 1/2:129)

In the last footnote of *Vom Ich*, Schelling cites Kant's claim in the *Critique of Judgment* that although Spinoza provides the necessary "unity of basis," which underlies and connects all natural beings, he does not provide a "unity of purpose." A unity of basis is a diffuse ontological unity in which all things are contained in (and manifestations of) the one substance. In contrast, the unity of purpose is a stronger unity that connects reality through organized relations (AA 5:393–394).[23] While Spinoza's goal, according to Kant, is to "offer a basis that will explain why the things of nature are connected in terms of purposes (which it does not deny)," all his system provides is "the unity of the subject in which they all inhere." "Spinozism," he writes, "does not accomplish what it tries to accomplish" (AA 5:393–394, 393).

In this last footnote in *Vom Ich*, Schelling agrees with Kant's assessment: "Kant is quite right when he says that Spinozism does not accomplish what Spinoza wants" (HKA 1/2:175R). He disagrees, however, with Kant's remedy to Spinoza's problem. For Kant, the desired stronger unity can only be achieved through purpose – and hence contingency and intentionality.[24] Contingency and intentionality, however, cannot be ascribed to the absolute I, Schelling contends, for they presuppose limitation and finitude.[25] Purpose, therefore, cannot be the means by which to solve the problem of unity.

What Spinoza sought, and did not achieve, Schelling maintains, is a unity that is neither purely mechanistic nor teleological, but a higher unity that is able to combine (and thus overcome the difference in) the two models (pp. 174–175).

[23] All citations to the *Critique of Judgment* are to AA.

[24] The unity of purpose, Kant writes, "cannot be thought unless the natural forms are also contingent; and yet Spinoza has taken this contingency away from them and has also deprived these forms of everything *intentional*, and has deprived the original basis of natural things of all understanding" (AA 5:325).

[25] Schelling writes: "Just as there is no possibility, no necessity, and no contingency for the infinite I, so likewise it does not know of any *relations of purpose* [*Zweckverknüpfung*] in the world" (HKA 1/2:174). For Kant as well, contingency and intentionality are ascribed to nature only regulatively, because of the fact that our discursive understanding requires the idea of a "purpose" in nature in order to arrive at a harmony between the understanding and nature – a harmony necessary for understanding the "particular" in nature and for achieving our moral ends. In other words, the notions of contingency and intentionality – which together amount to purpose – are necessitated by our understanding and cannot be ascribed to nature as such. This further illuminates Schelling's difference from Kant: given that Schelling does not agree with Kant's conception of the human understanding as merely discursive, but also as intuitive, he does not *need* to think of nature as contingent or intentional, but agrees with Spinoza's understanding of nature as necessary. He would add, however, that nature, although not purposive in Kant's sense, is lawful and organized.

Though Schelling does not elaborate what this unity would look like and mean for a philosophy of nature, a first gesture toward it can be found in his understanding of immanent causality and its relation to intellectual intuition. While on the surface he appears to agree with Spinoza's notion of causality, the difference between the two rests on the degree to which this causality is immanent. Schelling's claim is that Spinoza's absolute is not immanent *enough*: so long as it remains an object, a not-I, the absolute cannot be absolutely immanent, for it remains outside and other than the I. Differently put, every time that an individual self sees the infinite in the finite, it is not intuiting an entity that is other than itself, an absolute object. Rather, as a self that partakes of the infinite I, it is also intuiting itself. Thus, following Kant, Schelling maintains that intellectual intuition is necessarily participatory and hence productive.[26]

This, I think, is the essence of what it means for intellectual intuition to be non-objective. Intuition is not within the absolute as a part is within the whole, but *participates* in it in the most immediate way. This is only possible if the absolute is a self, and intuition is a *self*-intuition. The absolute, therefore, is not simply a substance that contains all things, but a unity in which all the parts actively participate. The relation between part and whole is not one of reflection (where the parts reflect the whole), but of participation (where the parts partake of the whole; p. 146). In this way, Schelling puts forth a conception of unity in which the parts are active participants, and thus – without relying on Kant's notion of purpose – provides a more adequate depiction of the relations within nature.

Although Schelling does not spell this out, his insistence on the absolute I, and his understanding of intellectual intuition as absolutely non-objective, are the first steps toward a conception of nature as productive, as a *self*-causing cause, in which all parts are active participants. As he sees it, Spinoza's diffuse ontological unity simply cannot account for the growth and development of natural products. By following through on Spinoza's immanentism, Schelling achieved what Spinoza did not – a conception of nature as active and developing. This immanence, in turn, is inherently connected to knowledge and intuition. It is only because the absolute is a self-intuiting I that it involves activity and productivity. Even in his most Fichtean work, the "Abhandlung zur Erläuterung des Idealismus der Wissenschaftslehre" (1796–1797), Schelling turns to a

[26] Schelling speaks of Section 76 of the *Critique of Judgment*, in which Kant identifies intellectual intuition as productive, in the following way: "Perhaps there have never been so many deep thoughts on so few pieces of paper as in Section 76 of the *Critique of Judgment*" (HKA 1/2:175R).

conception of intellectual intuition closer to Fichte's only because he is trying to find a way by which to put forth a concrete conception of the unity of nature. In this work, the structure of intellectual intuition serves as the ground of nature because it is "fully active and thus productive and immediate" (SW 1/1:379–380). Matter, in contrast, lacks the internal structure of intuition and thus cannot be the ground of nature as the absolute (it is neither active, nor immediate). Schelling's break in 1799, which once and for all distinguishes him from Fichte, further substantiates this view. In the *Entwurf eines Systems der Naturphilosophie*, Schelling grants nature the status of the absolute, only insofar as nature is nothing other than the self – that is, only insofar as nature is an ideal reality whose products are participants in nature's infinite productivity.[27]

[27] For the development of Schelling's philosophy of nature and his final break with Fichte in 1799, see my "From a Philosophy of Self to a Philosophy of Nature: Goethe and the Development of Schelling's *Naturphilosophie*," *Archiv für Geschichte der Philosophie* 92/3 (2010), 304–321.

CHAPTER 9

Schelling's philosophy of identity and Spinoza's Ethica more geometrico

Michael Vater

Schelling is one of the most historically minded philosophers to work in modern philosophy. Though Hegel decisively came to *his* philosophy while lecturing on the history of philosophy at Jena, Schelling's style of appropriating the past varied throughout his long career. At times he simply reproduces past contributions; at others, he actively combats the settled views of such figures as Plato, Spinoza, Leibniz, and Kant. While I am tempted to suggest that Schelling's *many* philosophies trace an ellipse determined by the twin foci of Kant's and Spinoza's thought, that is too simple a picture. I suggest instead that Spinoza is a lens or a filter for all of Schelling's appropriations of past thinkers, but one that would not stayed fixed. Perhaps, as for his friend and mentor, Goethe, from whom Schelling borrowed the text of the *Ethics* while working out his *Presentation of My System of Philosophy* (1801), Spinoza functioned as a 'strange attractor' for Schelling's speculation as it veered from version to version in its attempt to embody both poles of Kant's ambiguous heritage: the view that critical philosophy must take the form of a *system* of human knowledge while maintaining a rigorous theoretical silence on that which is most worthwhile in human reality, the apparent endowment of *freedom*.

As with all the German Idealists and Romantics who struggled to incorporate into transcendental idealism Spinoza's view that freedom is illusory in a cosmos both unitary and fractured along lines of perfectly traceable causal determination, Schelling's appropriation of Spinoza is mediated by the celebrated 1780 conversations on Spinoza between G. E. Lessing and F. H. Jacobi. These are variously reported in Moses Mendelssohn's *Morning Hours* and Jacobi's *Doctrine of Spinoza*. What came down as the watchword of those rich (or ironic) conversations was the epitome: "there is no leaving the absolute," or no transition

between the infinite and the finite.[1] In his early philosophical essays (1794–1796), where he presented a metaphysical version of Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*, Schelling argued the converse: there is no ascent to the absolute from the finite, i.e., no cosmological demonstration of God's reality. In his writing on *Naturphilosophie* (1797–1800), Schelling warms to the logical face of a Spinozistic universe and distances himself from the pulse of freedom that animated Fichte's thought. More mature phases of his thought, beginning with the 1801 *Presentation of My System* and extending through the 1809 *Essay on Human Freedom*, show Schelling struggling with two of Spinoza's least negotiable positions: that no transition between the infinite and the finite orders is thinkable, and that freedom is a conceptual surd, given that the sole human capacity to explain or demonstrate is the schema of causality or sufficient reason.

This chapter will focus on the first of Schelling's difficult moments with Spinoza: the attempt of the philosophy of identity simultaneously to maintain that the finite has no being except as embraced by the absolute, and that the finite's individuation within appearances can be explained through a 'minor-key' logic that substitutes geometrically constructed concepts of *quantitative indifference* and *quantitative difference* for the qualitative concepts of identity and difference, which fail to explain individuation and finitude. The first text to portray this struggle is the 1801 *Presentation of My System*. The problem of ontologically vindicating the finite order, at least enough to present a philosophical mirror of nature in *Naturphilosophie*, is the philosophical impulse of Schelling's apparently seamless reproduction of Spinoza's monism in this work. Though the philosopher can intuit an order of identity or creative expression underneath the apparently diverse mechanisms that organize natural phenomena, her real endeavor is to show that differentiations in nature have the character of repetitions, not elaborations, and that the activities of

[1] Thus Jacobi reports that he replied to Lessing's query on the *spirit* of Spinozism by stating that Spinoza had produced a totally abstract version of *ex nihilo nihil fit*, whereby any origination within the infinite or any "transition from the infinite to the finite" was denied. See F. H. Jacobi, *Concerning the Doctrine of Spinoza,* in *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, trans. G. di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 173–251, esp. 187–188. Schelling comments on Jacobi's report in his 1795 *Philosophical Letters on Dogmatism and Criticism*, noting that the "no transition" dictum results also from Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, except that the "spirit of Criticism" insists with Fichte that philosophy's chief task consists in solving the problem of the existence of the world – the feeling of objectivity that accompanies presentations (SW 1:313–315).

diverse forces in nature aim at a return from relative difference to relative indifference – the collapse of the natural cosmos back into the absolute.

We must first speak of Schelling's philosophical method in the 1801 essay, then address the initial fifty sections that set out the metaphysics of identity before we can focus on Schelling's appropriation of Spinoza. Despite formal similarities between Spinoza's geometric method and Schelling's numbered mathematical-geometrical construction, Schelling's direct debts to Spinoza are few: first, the Cartesian definitions of *substance* and *attribute*; second, an account of phenomena or modal being that reproduces Spinoza's teaching that nothing is intrinsically finite; and finally, a concept of 'potency' or natural force modeled on *conatus*.

METHOD IN THE 1801 *PRESENTATION OF MY SYSTEM*

From remarks that Schelling makes in his Preface, the intent of the *more geometric* presentation in *My System* is to let the subject speak for itself,[2] leaving aside the intent of the author and all extrinsic labels like 'realism' or 'idealism.' Though *perhaps* Fichte had up to this point presented a subjective version of idealism based on reflection, while Schelling, both in his essays on nature and in the *System of Transcendental Idealism*, had presented an objective idealism based on the productive power of the idea, the reader will learn nothing from such labels.[3] Spinoza is adopted as the paradigm for presenting the new system, says Schelling, because he is closest in form and content to the system of identity and because the geometric form allows for brevity and clarity.[4]

I use the word *exposition* rather than *deduction* for Schelling's elaboration of his new views, for Schelling's procedure is loosely 'axiomatic' and refers the reader to previous theorems, corollaries, and explanations, not to demonstrate new propositions with strict Euclidean necessity, but to

[2] Schelling, *Darstellung meines Systems der Philosophie*, in HKA 10:116. A full translation of the *Presentation of My System* appears in J. G. Fichte and F. W. J. Schelling, *The Philosophical Rupture between Fichte and Schelling: Selected Texts and Correspondence (1800–1802),* ed., introd., and trans. M. G. Vater and David M. Wood (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012).

[3] Schelling, *Darstellung*, in HKA 10:111. Schelling is careful to speak of a "possible difference" between his standpoint and Fichte's, an accurate depiction of the state of discussion between the two philosophers that the *Schelling–Fichte Briefwechsel* documents (F. W. J. Schelling and J. G. Fichte, *Schelling–Fichte Briefwechsel*, ed. H. Traub [Neuried: ars una, 2001]). It is Hegel's *Difference* essay (G. W. F. Hegel, *The Difference between Fichte's and Schelling's System of Philosophy*, trans. W. Cerf and H. S. Harris [Albany: State University of New York Press, 1977]) that first asserts that Fichte is enclosed in a subjective idealism, while Schelling has broken through to objective idealism, a charge that Schelling repeats and amplifies in the 1802 *Bruno*.

[4] HKA 10:115.

clarify grounds previously adduced and to present new propositions in the light of the *evidence* of those previously established. The procedure is Cartesian, not strictly Euclidean, and depends on theorems attaining plausibility as the upshot of an extensive meditation on fundamental principles. Early on Schelling asserts that the proposition 'Outside reason is nothing and inside it is everything' would require no proof or even explanation, but would stand as a transparent axiom if humans were not accustomed to view things from the standpoint of appearances rather than reason, and were habitually incapable of making the *abstraction* that philosophy requires, i.e., surrender of the personal or subjective point of view.[5] So Schelling's task is not to provide a Euclidean deduction from obvious definitions and transparent axioms, but to tear the reader away from subjective *reflection* and invite her toward the *salto mortale* of intellectual intuition[6] through a combination of argument, exposition, and a circle of logical evidence that the reader must in fact generate in herself. Though *reductio* and destructive dilemma are the devices that move the march of theorems, at crucial points self-evidence is evoked,[7] or a leap is made in Leibnizian fashion between the possibility of a situation in one theorem and its assertion as a truth in the next – a move comprehensible only if the reader has taken the trouble to discover the *Evidenz* – or beam of clarity – that illuminates the move to the latter.

This is as much as matters of method get formally discussed *inside* the *Presentation*, but after he broke off the elaboration of its philosophy of nature, Schelling penned several essays for his *New Journal for Speculative Physics*, which discussed topics such as intellectual intuition and construction. It is obvious that Spinoza's third kind of knowledge (intuition) and the 'intellectual love of God and the universe' that follows from it form the background for the idea of intellectual intuition, not only for Schelling, but for Fichte and Kant before him.[8] In the second essay, published in 1802 and later collected into the *Further Presentations from the System of Philosophy*, Schelling offers three overlapping definitions of intellectual intuition, as: (1) a generalized or God's-eye-point-of-view version of what we call, from the outside, the ontological proof for divine existence;[9] (2) a double-coincidence of thought and being, so that intuitive thinking comprehends absolute reality and, conversely, reality expresses itself as intuition ('formally absolute cognition') of the absolute; and (3) immediate insight into the uniqueness of this point where cognition wholly

[5] *Ibid*. 10:117–118. [6] *Ibid*. 10:116.
[7] Most strikingly at §21, 124. [8] See E2p44s2; E4p24f. [9] SW 4:367–368.

comprehends its object.[10] Just as the geometer constructs a quasi-sensible intellectual intuition in space, the philosopher deploys his constructions in a rational intuition that is the presupposition of all non-temporal and non-spatial thinking.[11] On this view, philosophy is not at all an account of the finite, so something like Plato's conundrum on the origin of virtue applies to it: can this essential tool of philosophy be learned, obtained by practice, acquired by instruction, or it is perhaps a divine gift? The answers are all negative.[12] These remarks hardly amount to a satisfactory exposition.

It is somewhat clearer what the philosopher does *with* intellectual intuition – to engage in *construction*, the production of a world-picture where every individual finds his place in the totality and the totality determines the place of every individual. Intellectual intuition's product is a taxonomy that integrates universality and particularity, just as the intuition that motivates it unites knowing and being. The 'universality' and 'particularity' under discussion, however, are not just logical abstractions: 'universality' comprehends being and knowing, since it is the universal or ideal aspect of the absolute, and 'particularity' is not the bare finite of sensible experience, but the finite that is organic or identical to the infinite. They are to one another as *original* and *copy*, with a vanishing difference between them, such that the particular displays the whole absolute as much as the universal does.[13] Philosophical construction locates archetypical individuals in an eidetic taxonomy. In imitation of the 'divine imagination' (*Einbildung*), the philosopher maps distinct orders upon one another, and in this intellectual in-forming (*Ineinsbildung*) brings the twofold striving of the absolute, for totality and for individuality, into equilibrium.[14] I cannot pretend this Platonic taxonomy is clear. As in the essay on intellectual intuition, Schelling is clearer on what construction is not (namely, deduction of the real world) than what it is.

THE METAPHYSICS OF IDENTITY IN THE 1801 *PRESENTATION*

Before we can assess Schelling's reception of Spinoza, we must review the overall structure of the metaphysics of identity in §§1–50. The densest section of the text contains the initial nine theorems where the themes of reason's peculiarly non-personal way of thinking, of the idea that its

[10] *Ibid*. 4:369. [11] *Ibid*. 4:361, 369n. [12] *Ibid*. 4:361.
[13] *Ibid*. 4:393–394. [14] *Ibid*. 4:395–396.

sole logic is the law of identity, of the doubling that is nonetheless hidden in the law of identity, and of the reinterpretation of identity as the non-difference of all finite predicates are introduced.

Reason and identity

No preliminary definitions or axioms are offered. Schelling begins with a verbal definition of reason as the complete indifference of the subjective and the objective. In a first explanatory paragraph, he acknowledges that the reader will have to struggle with terminology and usual ways of reflective thinking to attain the logical ether in which this thinking moves: "Reason's thinking is foreign to everyone; to conceive it as absolute, hence to come to the standpoint I require, one must abstract from what does the thinking."[15] The only path offered to this stance is negative; one must reflect on what philosophy presents as standing midway between the subjective and objective, and which behaves indifferently against both extremes.[16] The only gloss Schelling ever offers on this reflective ascent to the starting point comes in a footnote that connects the two sections of methodological essays written after the *Presentation* was published in the spring of 1801. Schelling there explains the logic of indifference and the intellectual intuition that it deploys as an activity of determining

> the absolute as that which is in itself neither thought nor being, but which, for that very reason, is absolute. Since reason is challenged to think the absolute neither as thought nor as being, but to think it nonetheless, a contradiction arises for reflection, since it conceives the absolute either as a case of being or a case of thinking. But intellectual intuition enters even into this contradiction and produces the absolute. In this breakthrough lies the luminous point where the absolute is positively intuited.[17]

This text was written when Hegel was working at Schelling's side in Jena,[18] and betrays the former's dialectic conception of 'reflection,' which plays such a large part in the 'Schelling' section of his *Differenzschrift*.[19] It is not obvious from Schelling's footnote exactly how philosophy can locate something midway between two ultimate opposites, or can demand of

[15] HKA 10:116. [16] *Ibid*. [17] SW 4:391–392n.

[18] See Schelling in Jena to Fichte in Berlin, October 3, 1801, in Schelling and Fichte, *Briefwechsel*, p. 220. Schelling there announces Hegel's publication of the *Differenzschrift*.

[19] In Hegel's view, reflection gets stuck in abstract opposites and so can assert only half-truths like "no transition from the infinite to the finite." Reason's work, reflection-potentiated, as Schelling would say, is to connect the opposites into antinomy: "Only in real opposition can the Absolute posit itself in the form of the subject or of the object, and only then can there be a transition of subject into object or of object into subject"; Hegel, *Difference*, p. 159.

reflection that it surrender its binary logic and move on to one of identity as non-difference.

A second paragraph of comment to §1 notes that it is the nature of reason to consider things as they are in themselves, apart from all succession, temporality, and spatial externality, which are frameworks imported by imagination – a direct echo of Spinoza's E2p44c2d: "It is the nature of reason to perceive things truly … to wit … as they are in themselves, that is … not as contingent but as necessary."

The second theorem, "Outside reason is nothing, and in it is everything," echoes Spinoza's "Whatever is, is in God, and nothing can be or be conceived without God" (E1p5). Associated remarks maintain, without explicitly invoking 'intellectual intuition,' that reason is coextensive with reality; that it is a unitary, self-same domain; and that the whole business of philosophy is to consider things as they are in and for reason. That everything *is* within reason and nothing has reality outside it should be a transparent axiom, says Schelling, except for our habit of taking appearances as things or failing to realize that things *are* outside reason only insofar as they are posited outside it through a false use of reason, unable to abstract from the subjective point of view.[20] But what does this do for us, who both live in a world of appearances and think – particularly if there is no exiting the absolute, no transition between reason-reality and existence in time and succession, the frameworks that imagination imports into reason?[21] We seem lost in the "night absolute" of *Fernere Darstellungen*, where Schelling says: "The *essence* of the absolute in and for itself says nothing to us, it fills us with images of an infinite enclosure, of an impenetrable stillness and concealment," until the absolute's form asserts itself in its own shape, "the day in which we comprehend that [essential] night and the wonders hidden in it, the light in which we clearly discern the absolute."[22] How are we to get from the essential self-enclosure of reason to form's articulation of its contents? How are we to get on with philosophy's obvious business of explaining the world?

Section 4 and the definition in §5 move us toward a non-temporal, non-discursive duality within absolute identity – the seed of difference that will manifest itself in appearances with its apparent individuals and its actual universal expression of identity as totality. For now, Schelling notes that reason operates in the domain of the eternal with its sole rule, the law of identity (A = A) – perhaps echoing Spinoza's contention that reason's nature is to consider things "under a certain form of eternity" (E2p44c2).

[20] HKA 10:117–118. [21] *Ibid*. 10:117. [22] SW 4:404–405.

Within this sole law of reason, however, there is a doubling of content therein, since A is named once as subject and again as predicate.[23] Despite this doubling of reason-identity, neither subject nor object is posited as real or in its own right, but only identity itself, which subsists independently of subject and predicate.[24] In a remark, Schelling in effect conceals this conceptual move from monolithic identity to articulated two-place identification by noting that the law of identity requires no demonstration, but is instead the ground of all demonstration.[25] Demonstration was not in play in previous theorems, however; they were dependent on reflection or so-called intellectual intuition. With the two-place unpacking of absolute- or reason-identity as the incontrovertible discursive 'law of identity,' difference has been smuggled into the absolute. Succeeding theorems cash this out rather dramatically as unconditioned cognition of absolute identity, or the coincidence of the *being* of absolute identity and unconditioned truth, again anchored by appeal to the law of identity.[26] The corollary to §8 shows that comprehension of these theorems moves in the ether of intellectual intuition, or involves something like an ontological proof: "Absolute identity cannot be thought except through the proposition A = A, yet it is posited through this proposition as *standing in being*. Therefore it *is* by virtue of being thought, and *it belongs to the essence of absolute identity to be*."[27] Section 9 and its corollary complete the terminological equation of reason, absolute identity, and unconditional being or reality. I suggest that if these propositions establish their content, it is by way of a meditative approach to ontological proof, whereby Cartesian criteria of clarity, distinctness of idea, and hence conceptual evidence might eventually be attained; it is certainly not Spinoza's demonstrative or axiomatic process. Apart from the initial decree that philosophy's standpoint is that of reason, not imagination, Spinoza has been absent from the exposition except by way of verbal echoes. Perhaps we might view these initial pages as a somewhat labored attempt to convey what Spinoza simply does by his definition of substance: that which is in itself and is conceived through itself.[28] Schelling might have recalled Spinoza's wonderful image from E5p23s: "Logical proofs are the eyes of the mind, whereby it sees and observes things."

Spinoza plainly enters the discussion in the next eleven theorems and associated comments. Sections 10–11 conclude from previous theorems

[23] HKA 10:118–119. [24] *Ibid*. 10:119. [25] *Ibid*. [26] *Ibid*.
[27] *Ibid*. The last phrase echoes Spinoza's assertion in E1p7. [28] E1d3.

that absolute identity is simply infinite,[29] capable neither of limitation from within or from without, and incapable of essentially being abolished as identity, since suspension of identity would entail that being ceased to pertain to its essence.[30] If everything is essentially infinite, everything is one, hence nothing *has come to be*, since everything is in its being absolutely eternal[31] – that is, as Spinoza defined eternity, its being cannot be comprehended except as following from the essence of absolute identity, which is without reference to time or duration.[32] Section 12 and its corollaries clarify that everything that is *subsists* within absolute identity, whose singular identity and intrinsic reality can never be canceled.[33] From the unqualified infinity of absolute identity, §14 directly follows: "*Nothing considered in itself is finite*," which may indirectly echo Spinoza's assertion that all things which follow from the absolute nature of any of God's attributes are eternal and infinite (E1p21). Schelling adds the following clarification:

> The fundamental mistake in all philosophy is the supposition that the absolute has actually stepped beyond itself and the [ensuing] struggle somehow to make this emergence from itself, however it happens, intelligible. Absolute identity has never ceased to be identity, and everything that *is*, intrinsically considered – is also not the appearance of absolute identity, but absolute identity itself. Further, since it is the nature of philosophy to investigate things as they are in themselves, that is, insofar as they are infinite and themselves absolute identity, so true philosophy consists in demonstrating that absolute identity (the infinite) does not step forth from itself, and that everything that is, insofar as it *is*, is itself infinitude, a proposition known only by Spinoza among all previous philosophers, even if he did not completely pursue its demonstration, nor express it clearly enough to avoid being misunderstood ever after.[34]

This passage recalls Jacobi's epitome of Spinozism, "there can be no transition from the infinite to the finite." If Schelling can show that, despite the web of appearances that arise in what we take to be the independent

[29] Paragraph 10, "*Absolute identity is absolutely infinite*," echoes Spinoza's definition of God as an absolutely infinite being (E1d8).

[30] HKA 10:120. The constructive dilemma that is the proof of §10 depends on E1ax1; that of §11 on E1ax7.

[31] HKA 10:120–121.

[32] E1d8expl Cf. Letter 12 to Ludwig Meyer, where Spinoza argues that since we can abstract *quantity from substance and conceive duration apart from eternity, the imagination can form the thoughts of* number, time, and measure which have no foundation *in re* (Baruch Spinoza, *The Ethics and Selected Letters*, trans. S. Shirley [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1982], pp. 233–234).

[33] Schelling utilizes E1p14c1 and 2, and E1p15 to expound these points.

[34] HKA 10:121. It is difficult to see the justice of Schelling's charge that Spinoza did not demonstrate this adequately; see E1p21–23 and associated proofs.

orders of finite being (nature and consciousness), identity remains the essence of all 'things' and that all 'things' have their being not in themselves but in the absolute, he will have succeeded in importing Spinoza's metaphysics into the post-Kantian world. But if he thinks himself excused from the labor of explaining a real derivation of the finite from the infinite, he faces the equally formidable task of explaining how appearances arise in seeming independence of absolute identity, and seem to have a temporal sort of being incommensurable with simple being or 'eternity.'

Indifference in the totality, difference in the individual

Schelling employs three conceptual maneuvers to explain the being of appearances.

(1) He employs Spinoza's distinction between *substance* and *attribute* – in his language, *essence* (*Wesen*) and *form* or 'form of being' – to argue that if absolute identity is to *exist* or appear in the framework of conditioned being, identity must carry with it an original cognition of being, so that whenever identity is posited in a conditioned aspect it is posited as cognition-and-object – or 'idea' and 'body' in Spinoza's terminology. This view is argued in §§15–17 and associated comments.[35] Crucial to Schelling's argument is the move, introduced in §§4–8, that identity is conceived by reason as synonymous with the law of identity, and his apparently empty two-place interpretation of substantial identity as the identity of subject and predicate. Identity may be monolithic in essence, but in form it is the identity of cognition and being, so when §15 advances the idea that "*absolute identity* IS *or* SUBSISTS *only under the form of the law A = A*," a coeternal infinite cognition of identity is introduced alongside identity, at once coextensive with it and replicating it so that "*absolute identity* IS *only under the form of an identity of identity*" (§16, supplementary note 2). It is this *identity of identity* that makes *essential* identity and its form of being (*cognition* of identity) inseparable. In this section we see a clear use of Spinoza's concepts of substance and attribute: absolute identity is self-existent substance or the 'absolute in essence'; cognition of identity, with the implicit division into the conceptual orders of knowing and being, is the absolute's 'form.'

(2) In succeeding theorems, the assertion of §17 – "*there is a primordial cognition of absolute identity and this is directly established with the proposition A = A*" – receives a distinctly Fichtean interpretation. Section 18

[35] HKA 10:121–123.

asserts that everything that *is* is essentially identity, but that in its form or mode of appearance it is a cognition of absolute identity. The infinite self-cognition that is identity's form or mode of being, however, cannot exist or appear as such, and though its identity with substantial identity is asserted, its realization evidently entails that an *endless* positing of *finite* instances of cognition-and-being or subject-objectivity is necessary. Says Schelling in §21: "*Absolute identity cannot infinitely cognize itself without infinitely positing itself as subject and object* – This proposition is self-evident." Perhaps brevity and directness are salutary here. If there is no transition from the infinite to the finite, then perhaps a Jacobean *salto mortale* is in order, an abrupt caesura indicating an argumentatively indefensible jump from the order of reason to that of imagination.

In the last twelve theorems, Schelling utilized first Spinoza's doctrine of substance and attributes, then his less articulated view of philosophy's inability to account for modal limitation or finite entities as such.

(3) The following ten theorems, which clinch Schelling's argument, substitute a logic of primordial non-difference (*Indifferenz*) for the logic of identity deployed up to this point. It is a conceptual leap, and perhaps a reflective one, to go from primitive identity, even 'the identity of identity,' to identity as the *neither/nor* of all possible predicates.[36] Kant had cashed out the logical freight of the idea of God as the *Inbegriff* of all possible predicates; the only way to conceptualize identity along that path is to view it as simultaneously identity and difference, both containing and suppressing the difference of articulated sets of antithetical predicates.[37]

Based on the identity of essence and form in the absolute, and the mere 'place-holder' difference between subject and object if they are posited under the law of identity, Schelling first asserts that there is no intrinsic difference between subject and object – that is, no *qualitative* difference between them is possible.

> Since … no difference between the two is possible with respect to being itself (since [identity] *is* equally unconditioned and in essence the same in both s[ubject] and o[bject]), there remains only a quantitative difference possible, that is, the kind of difference that occurs with respect to the *magnitude* of being,

[36] In *Bruno*, under the influence of Hegel, Schelling defines the absolute as the identity of identity and non-identity. Hegel had said in the *Differenzschrift:* "… the Absolute itself is the identity of identity and non-identity, being opposed and being one are both together in it" (Hegel, *Difference*, p. 156). In *Bruno*, Schelling says: "To make identity the supreme principle, we must think of it as comprehending even this highest pair of opposites and the identity that is its opposite as well, and we must define this supreme identity as the identity of identity and opposition, or the identity of the self-identical and the non-identical" (SW 4:236).

[37] See KrV, A573/B601–A578/B606.

namely that one and the same identity is posited, but with a preponderance of subjectivity or objectivity.[38]

Quantitative difference (apparent preponderance of subjectivity or objectivity) implies the active positing of 'form' or subject-objective difference; it cannot characterize the absolute in essence, for that is monolithic identity. Quantitative difference is possible, therefore, only *outside* the absolute.[39] From the perspective of imagination or reflection, where difference seems to obtain and involves not only quantitative but qualitative distinctions, *individual beings* or finite 'things' seem to be. But these arise and are discriminated only within *totality*, for "absolute identity is absolute totality," at least insofar as it *is* or is expressed under form.[40] Schelling then aggregates these distinctions to assert:

(A) Quantitative difference, or apparent predominance of subjectivity or objectivity, is conceivable only with respect to individuals, not the totality of individuals or the universe.
(B) If we imagine that quantitative difference occurs with respect to individual things, then we must conceive the absolute identity insofar as it *is*, or is expressed in the form of being, to be the quantitative indifference of subjectivity and objectivity.[41]

To summarize these most important points of the *Presentation*, the absolute is identity in essence; in form it is both quantitative indifference as *totality* (the universe) and quantitative difference as *individual* or in the perspectives (potencies) where individuals are grouped and discriminated.

Individuation: the infinite nature of the finite

The next ten theorems consolidate the formulae just presented – the absolute *is* as the indifference of the subjective and objective in the universe or totality, but *exists* qua individual as the quantitative difference of the subjective and the objective, as multitudes of subject-objects or items involving cognition – under the Spinozistic formula: "*each individual*," or the finite item of appearances, "*while not absolute, is infinite in its kind*" (§40). In a note added to §30 of his copy of the *Presentation*, Schelling writes, "The absolute therefore *is* only under the form of totality, and this expression 'quantitative difference in individuals and indifference in the whole' says exactly what 'the identity of the finite and the infinite' does."[42]

[38] HKA 10:125–126. [39] *Ibid*. 10:126. [40] *Ibid*. 10:127.
[41] *Ibid*. 10:127–130. [42] *Ibid*. 10:128.

Schelling was misunderstood on this crucial point even by Fichte, who accused him of positing difference in the absolute.[43] Hence it is important for Schelling to establish the identity of the absolute and the produced universe – as its immanent or indwelling cause, not its extrinsic or transient cause[44] – and to argue that even though the absolute is expressed as the universe, its essence remains indivisible and eternal.[45]

But these moves seem to make the finite simply infinite, and so finitize the absolute. So Schelling must insist that the finite individual is a modification of the being of absolute identity, not absolute identity itself, that it has its ground of being outside itself; having being not essentially but by deferral or dependence on another, it is determined by another finite being, which in turn is determined by another, and so forth.[46] Determination, limitation, or conditions upon its being are contributed by other finite beings in succession or contiguity, even though the finite's being is part of the form of the absolute's necessary existence or expresses the being of the absolute. That is to say, the ground of finitude is other finites, or, in Schelling's terms, the '*quantitative difference* of the subjective and objective,' while the reality of the finite is infinitude, or the '*quantitative indifference* of the subjective and objective.'[47] Schelling has not succeeded in simplifying Spinoza's thorny doctrine of vanishing finitude by translating it into an alternate language. He is nonetheless prepared to advance the claim that since the finite exists with the indivisible and indestructible being of absolute identity, identity exists under the same form in the individual and in the universe or totality:[48] it is infinite in its finitude, hence a presentation of the one existent, the universe.

[43] Fichte misread Schelling's letter of October 3, 1801, which had carefully stated: "This absolute, I claimed in my *Presentation*, exists under the form of quantitative difference in the individual (this is intuition, which is always a determinate item) and of quantitative indifference in the whole (this is thought)" (Schelling and Fichte, *Briefwechsel*, p. 211). In a letter to Schelling on October 8, 1801, Fichte writes: "You say 'the absolute' (concerning *which* and whose *determination* I completely agree with you, and whose intuition I have also possessed for a long time) 'as I claimed in my *Presentation*, *exists under the form of quantitative difference*.' This is clearly what you assert; and it is *precisely because of this* that I found your system to be in error and rejected the *Presentation* of your system" (p. 233).

[44] HKA 10:131. Cf. E1p18. [45] HKA 10:131. Cf. E1p13.

[46] HKA 10:132 – an obvious use of Spinoza's formula for linear causality, E1p28.

[47] HKA 10:132–133.

[48] *Ibid*. 10:134. Compare §51, supplementary note, pp. 144–145, where Schelling discusses the three ways of viewing matter – as 'real,' as infinite, and as not existent since there is only absolute identity – in terms of Spinoza's three grades of cognition (E2p40s2).

Potency, conatus*, and the constructed line*

In his writings on the philosophy of nature in 1799–1800, Schelling abandoned the static categories of Kant's construction of matter and Fichte's alternation between productivity and product, and put in their place the idea that nature expresses itself in a series of nested levels that replicate and resume one identical structure or dynamic process.[49] These levels are called *Potenzen* – potencies, or powers – and bumping up a level, or expressing the same structure in a more dynamic or organic form, is called *Potenzierung*. The terms express the ideas of possibility, power, force, and exponential increase (as in squaring or cubing a root in mathematics). Though Schelling does not explicitly refer to Spinoza's *conatus* or the finite being's endeavor to preserve itself in being, perhaps there is some resonance with the latter's psychology of striving and transcending limits in the discussion of potentiation in §§ 41–50. It is clear in the ensuing philosophy of nature that Schelling recognizes the homeostatic quality of natural systems and the involvement of subordinate levels of natural processes in higher ones, so that, for example, the duality of attractive and repulsive forces found in gravity is manifested again as polarity in magnetism, positive and negative charges in electricity, etc.

As he develops this final, most schematic section of the *Presentation*'s metaphysics of identity, Schelling relies on the idea already proved that "*every individual is, with respect to itself, a totality*" (§41), or, otherwise expressed, every expression of quantitative difference (every A = B) is in itself quantitative indifference (A = A) or a clear expression of the absolute, hence a totality – but a *relative* totality.[50] This idea of relative totality captures the expressive power of potentiation: whatever appears as subject or object is in itself only a subject-object or an indifference of knowing and being. Only in comparison to other finite subject-objects will one item be relatively subjective and another objective, and so able to be grouped with other subjective phenomena (for example, humans as moral

[49] In the 1800 *System of Transcendental Idealism*, Schelling still speaks Fichte's language of "epochs in the history of consciousness" that correlate to various stages in Kant's construction of matter. Not until the *Allgemeine Deduktion des dynamischen Prozesses* of 1800–1801 can one see a shift from talk of a "construction of matter" through "the basic categories of physics: magnetism, electricity, and chemical process" (§§1, 4) to talk of letting the various moments in this construction "go free and develop themselves" in order to display genetically moments that exist all at once in nature and show the philosopher, already the highest "*potentiation*" of the process, the truth about himself by following the path that nature herself has taken (§§30, 63). See Translator's Introduction, in F. W. J. Schelling, *First Outline of a System of the Philosophy of Nature*, trans. K. Peterson (Albany: SUNY Press, 2004), p. xxviii.

[50] HKA 10:135.

agents) in one order of appearances that seems to be opposed to another that is more objective (for example, humans as actors in national or world history). Since what exists is always only the indifference of subjectivity and objectivity or knowing and being, whatever the sorts of phenomena that appear in the finite order (nature) or in the infinite order (embodied consciousness), each in relation to itself is simply an instance of indifference.[51] Comparisons among phenomena are not extrinsically generated and imposed as a foreign taxonomy; amenability to taxonomy is ontologically grounded in the sameness of phenomena as indifference-in-the-guise-of-difference. I cannot pretend that Schelling's exposition of what 'potency' means is clear at this point. Not until 1802 or 1803 will he be able to convey the ideas of potency and potentiation in plainer language, as the reflection of the infinite into the finite and the resumption of the latter into the former.[52]

Two further ideas complete the metaphysics of identity and facilitate the transition to a unified philosophy of nature. The first is that "*all potencies are absolutely contemporaneous*" (§44),[53] which implies there is no intrinsic order in natural or social wholes, and no definite process that is fundamental. For the purpose of explanation, philosophy distinguishes various levels that in truth exist all at once; though nature is one and wholly consistent in its behavior, we view phenomena successively and first have to learn mechanics, then the physics of electrical and magnetic phenomena, then chemistry and biology to begin to understand its ways. Nature does not evolve in time, as far as Schelling can imagine the possibility, but understanding must undertake a developmental process in order to approximate to a robust naturalism. The contemporaneity of all potencies also seems to imply a more subtle version of the *hen kai pan* that so frightened Jacobi.[54] The universe is the absolute *without remainder*, but only the totality adequately expresses the absolute; this is rather like Spinoza's idea that the "face of the whole universe" or the composite ratio of motion to rest in the whole is a steady-state or invariant upshot of local variations in velocity and interaction among so-called individual entities.[55]

[51] *Ibid*. 10:135–136.

[52] See Supplement to the Introduction (1803) in F. W. J. Schelling, *Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature* (1797/1803), *t*rans. P. Heath and E. Harris (Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 49–51.

[53] HKA 10:136.

[54] Jacobi, *Doctrine of Spinoza*, p. 187.

[55] See Letter 64, Baruch Spinoza to G. H. Schuller (Spinoza, *Ethics and Selected Letters*, pp. 253–254); and E2lem7s.

The second move that completes the metaphysics of identity is the construction of a schematic line that represents the complicated idea of 'indifference in the whole, difference in the parts' in simple directional terms. The finite, whether viewed as totality or as individual items, is expressed as A = B, where B represents what is, and A that which is not, but which cognizes B.[56] These real and ideal factors of finite difference, which represent Spinoza's two orders of attributes known to us, extension and thought (E2p1 and 2), can be represented as different tendencies or directions (*Richtungen*)[57] – though this seems a rather arbitrary presupposition unless one assumes something like Fichte's primordial category of activity as that which can unify both being and knowing. If they are opposed tendencies or directions, they can be represented on a continuous geometrical line, with one terminus representing subjectivity or cognition, the other objectivity or being, and the midpoint representing the indifferent reality expressed in every point of the line.[58] What the constructed line adds to the explanation of potentiation is the ability visually to portray apparent difference nested within real indifference, for the line, while endlessly divisible, is never divided, and any arbitrarily selected point chosen to represent an individual (or any segment chosen to represent a potency or taxonomic collection) is fundamentally three points: $^{+}$A = B, signifying the subjective pole or predominate subjectivity; the midpoint, A = A, signifying the ontological basis of indifference; and A = B^{+}, predominant objectivity. With this schema in place, the stage is set for a depiction of nature that owes as much to Plato's *Timaeus* as to the physical speculation of Spinoza, Newton, Leibniz, and Kant. For nature is not so much a series of nested domains, each operating with its own specific laws, as an interconnected whole whose domains are functionally demarcated but operate in concert, as do the organs and supporting biochemical mechanisms in the animal.

Matter and the philosophy of nature

Space will not permit an extensive look at the *Naturphilosophie* of the *Presentation*, but perhaps an overview will be informative. For the

[56] HKA 10:137–138. [57] *Ibid*. 10:138,

[58] *Ibid*. 10:139–140. In the Preface, Schelling credited his collaborator in *Naturphilosophie*, Carl Eschenmayer, with the idea of representing the nested orders of nature as a divisible but undivided line, extending from its point of origin to negative infinity on one side and to positive infinity on the other. See C. Eschenmayer, "Dedukzion des lebenden Organismus," in A. Röschlaub (ed.), *Magazin zur Vervollkommnung der theoretischen und praktischen Heilkunde*, Vol. 11.3 (Frankfurt am Main, 1799), pp. 329–390.

replicative, nested ladder of potencies shows that one structure prevails throughout the levels of nature that the sciences discriminate, and that this structure is emergent from one fundamental activity – a twofold endeavor to abolish difference and return quantitative difference (whether that involves predominant 'objectivity' or 'subjectivity') to quantitative indifference. Just as singular entities are 'imaginative' or merely conceptual products of dividing the field of interaction into multiple but transient centers of power, so all 'qualities' or 'activities' that can be discriminated are only functional, relative to others, and emergent from processes rather than fundamental properties of things. This is a highly social or interactive view of nature – such as would have displeased Newton, Clarke, and Kant, and pleased Leibniz, Goethe, and Whitehead. It is consonant with Spinoza's physics insofar as in it entities are discriminated on the basis of temporary shifts in the ratio of motion and rest, and insofar as 'motion and rest,' while they are concepts basic to a mechanistic worldview, are conceived as relative, not absolute, qualities, measurable for science not by some absolute standard but by conventional agreement based on human physiology and perceptual capacities.[59]

The transition from metaphysics to speculative physics or *Naturphilosophie* involves a bit of conceptual fudging. Schelling reaches back to his Fichtean roots to import an egological interpretation of the opposed directions of quantitative difference: B, or indefinite extension, limited by the cognitive *principle* that in a sense constitutes it, is denominated the *outward* direction; and A, the cognitive principle or Spinoza's infinite attribute of thought, is called the *inward* direction.[60] From the elements of the constructed line of potentiation, parsed as an overlay of relative totality on the vanishing distinction between relative identity and relative duplicity, space is constructed as the potentiation of relative identity (length), relative duplicity (breadth), and relative totality (depth) in light of the 'first presupposed item' – the purely directional line expressing difference vis-à-vis indifference.[61] There is some deductive hocus-pocus here: nature must begin, as Kant appreciated, with impenetrable *filled* space, and there seems to be an element of 'there' even in empty space that thinking cannot pull out of its ethereal hat.

With space established and a twofold directional striving of the relatively differentiated item, Schelling concludes that matter is present. It is called the 'first existent,' though it might well have been called the

[59] See the axioms and lemmata, as well as the associated corollaries and proofs, of E2p13.
[60] HKA 10:141–142. [61] *Ibid*. 10:143–144.

sole existent, since matter is coextensive with nature. Matter occupies or 'fills' space as the mutual check of outward- and inward-working tendencies. The expansive or subjective pole is an outward that never gets outside, so a mere outer that is no outer, and the objective or limiting tendency is likewise an inner that never gets inside, so a mere inner, or one that is no inner. A mere outer checked by a mere inner is no motion: a pure 'there,' so in its most basic manifestation matter just occupies space. Schelling adds that if we view matter through the trifocals of Spinoza's three modes of cognition, viewed in sensible terms, matter is just dead stuff, from the standpoint of the infinite or cognition, it is totality and a field of infinite activity, and one can "finally recognize that matter, absolutely considered, simply is not and only absolute identity is."[62] The metaphysics of identity had viewed what is through the lens of exact or speculative cognition and found nothing but absolute identity; the philosophy of nature will view it as a field of infinite and self-potentiating activity.

SCHELLING'S APPROPRIATION OF SPINOZA

We have argued that Schelling took over Spinoza's Cartesian definitions of *substance* and *attribute*, that which exists in itself and that which is conceived through itself; that he adapted Spinoza's vanishing concept of the being of modes, which maintained that no entity is intrinsically finite; and finally that he elaborated his own concepts of 'potencies' or orders of phenomenal being and natural force, by looking to Spinoza's 'endeavor' or *conatus*. To assess his success in this takeover of a historical text, we can look back at his intent. At the beginning of the Preface, Schelling announces that though he had previously expounded two philosophies, one from the side of nature and one from the side of consciousness, he had always figured the two as rooted in a common ground, a philosophy of identity that he now somewhat prematurely presents, owing to pressures from critics on both sides: the forces of realism and those of idealism.[63] Despite Schelling's claim, it is clear that the metaphysics of identity is newly minted in 1801, and that both in its content and its method it is radically different from the genetic style of earlier deductions Schelling crafted for both nature and consciousness, modeled on Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*.

[62] *Ibid*. 10:144–145. Cf. E2p40s2, [63] HKA 10:109ff.

Schelling's Spinozistic *Presentation* of 1801 was not his only attempt to appropriate a historical philosophy and refashion it within the transcendental movement. He did not try again to think and speak in the terminological guise of Spinoza, but in ensuing essays decked out his *essential* Spinozism – the *eternal's embrace of both the finite and the infinite orders* – in Neoplatonic garb. I think Schelling was successful in identifying Spinoza's key doctrines, in adapting his style of presentation, but the first text of the philosophy of identity is more abstract, metaphysical, and self-concealing than its model, and it lacks the warmth and humanity of Spinoza's ultimate soteriological intent.[64] The acute reader can, as Schelling says, anticipate the author, and in main outlines at least see the glimmers of a psychology, social philosophy, ethics, and philosophy of history that will return her to herself. But if even Fichte failed to appreciate the pivotal conceptual formula: *the absolute is qualitative indifference, the totality quantitative indifference, and the individual quantitative difference*, what hope is there for the non-professional reader? The mature Hegel rightly assesses Schelling's chief conceptual failing – overdependence on categories of quantity. Or perhaps that is symptomatic of a deeper failing: trying to overcome a binary logic with more binary logic.[65]

[64] *Ibid*. 10:211n.

[65] See G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. G. Di Giovanni (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 326–353, 386–417.

CHAPTER 10

"Omnis determinatio est negatio": determination, negation, and self-negation in Spinoza, Kant, and Hegel

Yitzhak Y. Melamed

> "Everything depends here on the correct understanding of the status and significance of negativity"[1]

INTRODUCTION

Spinoza's letter of June 2, 1674 to his friend Jarig Jelles addresses several distinct and important issues in Spinoza's philosophy. It explains briefly the core of Spinoza's disagreement with Hobbes' political theory, develops his innovative understanding of numbers, and elaborates on Spinoza's refusal to describe God as one or single.[2] Then, toward the end of the letter, Spinoza writes:

> With regard to the statement that figure is a negation and not anything positive, it is obvious that matter in its totality, considered without limitation [*indefinitè consideratam*], can have no figure, and that figure applies only to finite and determinate bodies. For he who says that he apprehends a figure, thereby means to indicate simply this, that he apprehends a determinate thing and the manner of its determination. This determination therefore does not pertain to the thing

[1] G. W. F. Hegel, review of Jacobi's *Werke* (1816), in *Heidelberg Writings*, trans. B. Bowman and A. Speight (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 8. Unless otherwise marked, all references to the *Ethics*, the early works of Spinoza, and Letters 1–29 are to Edwin Curley's translations. In references to the other letters of Spinoza I have used Samuel Shirley's translation. I am indebted to Arash Abazari, Karl Ameriks, Florian Ehrensperger, Eckart Förster, Zach Gartenberg, and Dalia Nassar for their very helpful comments on earlier versions of this chapter.

[2] The original Dutch text of the letter is lost. The *Opera posthuma* relies on a Latin translation. Spinoza's view of numbers as classes of classes partly anticipates Frege's conception of number. See P. Geach, "Spinoza and the Divine Attributes," *Royal Institute of Philosophy Supplement* (1971), 15–27 (p. 23); and G. Frege, *The Foundation of Arithmetic*, ed. J. L. Austin (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1996), §49. On Spinoza's philosophy of mathematics, see Y. Melamed, "On the Exact Science of Non-Beings: Spinoza's View of Mathematics," *Iyyun: The Jerusalem Philosophical Quarterly* 49 (2000), pp. 3–22.

in regard to its being [*esse*]; on the contrary, it is its non-being [*non-esse*]. So since figure is nothing but determination, *and determination is negation* [*Quia ergo figura non aliud, quam determinatio, et determinatio negatio est*], figure can be nothing other than negation, as has been said.[3]

Arguably, what is most notable about this letter is the fate of a single subordinate clause that appears in the last sentence of this passage: *et determinatio negatio est*. That clause was to be adopted by Hegel and transformed into the slogan of his own dialectical method: *Omnis determinatio est negatio* ("Every determination is negation").[4] Of further significance is the fact that, while Hegel does credit Spinoza with the discovery of this most fundamental insight, he believes Spinoza failed to appreciate the importance of his discovery.[5]

The issue of negation and the possibility of self-negation stand at the very center of the philosophical dialogue between the systems of Spinoza and Hegel, and in this chapter I will attempt to provide a preliminary explication of this foundational debate between the two systems. In the first part of the chapter I will argue that the "determination is negation" formula has been understood in at least three distinct senses among the German Idealists, and as a result many of the participants in the discussion of this formula were actually talking past each other. The clarification of the three distinct senses of the formula will lead, in the second part of the chapter, to a more precise evaluation of the fundamental debate between Spinoza and Hegel (and the German Idealists in general) regarding the possibility (or even necessity) of self-negation. In this part I will evaluate the validity of each interpretation of the determination formula, and motivate the positions of the various participants in the debate.

A QUARREL OVER A BEWITCHED FORMULA

The importance of the "determination is negation" formula for understanding Hegel's philosophy and German Idealism in general is hardly

[3] Ep. 50; G IV/240/6–15; my emphasis.

[4] The universalized formulation (*omnis*) appears first in Hegel's 1816 review of Jacobi's *Werke*. See Hegel, *Heidelberg Writings*, p. 9. For the denotation of *determinatio* in classical Latin and in Descartes, see Alan Gabbey's most helpful study, "Force and Inertia in the Seventeenth Century: Descartes and Newton," in S. Gaukroger (ed.), *Descartes: Philosophy, Mathematics, and Physics* (Brighton: Harvest Press, 1980), pp. 230–320 (esp. pp. 248–253).

[5] A similar attitude toward Spinoza can be found in Fichte. See his claim in this context that "Spinoza forgets his very act of insight" (J. G. Fichte, *The Science of Knowing: The 1804 Lectures on the* Wissenschaftslehre, trans. W. E. Wright [Albany: SUNY Press, 2005], eighth lecture, p. 69).

disputed,[6] yet a precise explanation of the meaning of this formula is still a desideratum. The main reason for the evasiveness of such an explanation is the fact that the formula has been used in several distinct ways by various philosophers, and sometimes, perhaps, in more than one way by the same philosopher. In this part I will explain three distinct senses of the formula. While at first glance the differences among these explications of the one formula may appear as mere nuances, the immediate implications of these nuances turn out to be substantial.

(a) "Determination is negation" as asserting the unreality of the finite. According to this reading, the formula states that (1) God, or the infinite, is absolutely *indeterminate*, while finite things are just determinations, limitations, or negations of the absolutely infinite (or of the absolutely indeterminate).[7] In addition, this reading accepts that (2) what is merely negation or determination of the infinite is not fully real.

Such a reading of the formula is the way Maimon, Jacobi, and Hegel understood Spinoza's claims, and for each of the three, this interpretation of the "determination is negation" formula played a crucial role in their general reconstruction of Spinoza's philosophy.

In his *Streifereien im Gebiete der Philosophie* (1793) Maimon writes: "Spinoza claims with Parmenides: only the real [*das Reelle*], which is comprehended by the understanding, exists. What is linked with the real in a finite being is nothing but a limitation [*Einschränkung*] of the real, a negation to which no existence [*Existenz*] can be ascribed."[8] Similarily, in his autobiography (1792–1793), Maimon stresses the same point as the common element between Spinoza and the Kabbalah:

In fact, the Kabbalah is nothing but expanded Spinozism, in which not only is the origin of the world explained by the limitation [*Einschränkung*] of the divine being, but also the origin of every kind of being, and its relation to the rest, is

[6] See, for example, D. Moyar, *Hegel's Conscience* (Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 28–29; and P. Franks, *All or Nothing: Systematicity, Transcendental Arguments, and Skepticism in German Idealism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005), pp. 170–171, 340.

[7] This view may already appear in Descartes. See the Fifth Set of Replies: "All limitation implies a negation of the infinite" (AT VII:365; CSM II:252). This point is essential for Descartes' argument in the Third Meditation that our notion of the infinite is prior to the finite and thus cannot be constructed from the finite. Yet, it is unclear whether for Descartes the infinite (i.e., God) is absolutely indeterminate (as in medieval negative theology) or maximally determined, i.e., having all determination/perfections. See the discussion of the third interpretation of the *determinatio* formula below.

[8] "Spinoza behauptet nach dem Parmenides, nur das Reelle, vom Verstande begriffene existirt, was mit dem Reellen in einem endlichen Wesen verknupft ist, ist bloß die Einschränkung des Reellen, eine Negation, der keine Existenz beigelegt werden kann" (S. Maimon, *Gesammelte Werke*, ed. V. Verra, 7 vols. [Hildesheim: Olms, 1965–1976], Vol. IV, pp. 62–63).

derived from a separate attribute of God. God, as the ultimate subject and the ultimate cause of all beings, is called *Ensoph* (*the Infinite, of which, considered in itself, nothing can be predicated*).[9]

In both passages, Maimon suggests that for Spinoza finite things are merely limitations, or negations, of the real, i.e., God, which in itself has no predicates. Relying on this interpretation, Maimon suggests that Spinoza is wrongly described as an "atheist," since in fact in his system only God truly exists. Thus, Maimon argues, Spinoza's system should be called "acosmism," since it denies the reality of the world of finite things (the cosmos), rather than the reality of God.[10] It is noteworthy that Maimon not only ascribed acosmism to Spinoza but in fact adhered to this view himself already in his earliest Hebrew writings.[11]

Jacobi presents a similar view regarding the reality of finite things in Spinoza in his 1785 book, *Über die Lehre des Spinoza in Briefen an den Herrn Moses Mendelssohn*:

Determinatio negatio est, seu determinatio ad rem juxta suum esse non pertinet [Determination is negation, or determination does not pertain to a thing according to its being]. Individual things [*Die einzelnen Dinge*] therefore, so far as they only exist in a certain determinate mode, are *non-entia*; the indeterminate infinite being [*das unbestimmte unendliche Wesen*] is the single true *ens reale, hoc est, est omne esse, & præter quod nullum datur esse*.[12]

[9] S. Maimon, *Salomon Maimons Lebensgeschichte*, ed. Z. Batscha (Frankfurt am Main: Insel Verlag, 1984), p. 84 (S. Maimon, *The Autobiography of Solomon Maimon*, trans. J. Clark Murray [Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2001], p. 105); my emphasis.

[10] See Maimon, *Lebensgeschichte*, pp. 216–217. On Maimon's reading of Spinoza, see Y. Melamed, "Salomon Maimon and the Rise of Spinozism in German Idealism," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 42 (2004), 79–80. On the acosmist interpretation of Spinoza among the German Idealists, see Y. Melamed, "Acosmism or Weak Individuals? Hegel, Spinoza, and the Reality of the Finite," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2010), 77–92.

[11] In his 1778 Hebrew manuscript, *Hesheq Shelomo* [*Solomon's Desire*], Maimon writes: "It is impossible to conceive any other existence but His, may he be blessed, no matter whether it is a substantial or an accidental existence. And this is the secret of the aforementioned unity, namely, *that only God, may he be blessed, exists, and that nothing but him has any existence at all*" (S. Maimon, *Hesheq Shelomo*, MS 8°6426 at the National Library, Jerusalem, p. 139); my emphasis.

[12] F. H. Jacobi, *The Main Philosophical Writings and the Novel* Allwill, trans. G. di Giovanni (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994), pp. 219–220 (F. H. Jacobi, *Die Hauptschriften zum Pantheismusstreit zwischen Jacobi und Mendelssohn,* ed. H. Scholz [Berlin: Reuther & Richard, 1916], pp. 150–151). The phrase *hoc est, est omne esse, et præter quod nullum datur esse* is taken from the end of §76 of Spinoza's TIE. The phrase is not easy to translate. Most English translations of this phrase regrettably neglect the "est *omne esse*" ("is *all Being*"), which I believe is quite crucial. For a very helpful discussion of the *Pantheismusstreit* and Jacobi's reading of Spinoza, see E. Förster, *The Twenty-Five Years of Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), Chapter 4.

Finally, Hegel portrays this view in some detail in his *Lectures on the History of Philosophy* and takes it to be Spinoza's single most important insight.

> With regard to the determinate, Spinoza established this thesis: *omnis determinatio est negatio* [all determination is negation]. Hence, only the non-particularized or the universal *is*. It alone is what is substantial and therefore truly actual. As a singular thing, the soul or the mind is something limited. It is by negation that a singular thing is. Therefore, [the singular thing] does not have genuine actuality. This on the whole is Spinoza's idea.[13]

Notice the inference in the penultimate sentence of the above paragraph: finite or singular things do not have genuine actuality because they are just negations.

Roughly the same interpretation of the formula also appears in Hegel's *Lectures on Logic* and in the *Science of Logic*.

> Spinoza said, "All determination is negation [*omnis determinatio est negatio*]." That is an important principle which was especially important to Spinoza. Relative to [Spinoza's] One, everything else is determinate, and everything determinate is negation.[14]
>
> That determinateness is negation posited as affirmative is Spinoza's proposition: *omnis determinatio est negatio*, a proposition of infinite importance … *The unity of Spinoza's substance*, or that there is only one substance, is the necessary consequence of this proposition, that determinateness is negation … Spinoza conceived [Thought and Extension] as attributes, that is, such as do not have a particular subsistence, a being-in-and-for-itself, but only are as sublated as moments; or rather, since substance is the total void of internal determinateness, they are not even moments; the attributes, like the modes, are distinctions made by an external understanding. – Also the substantiality of individuals cannot hold its own before that substance. The individual refers to itself by setting limits [*Grenzen*] to every other; but these limits are therefore also the limits of its self; they are references to the other; the individual's existence is not in the individual.[15]

[13] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy,* trans. E. S. Haldane and F. H. Simson, 3 vols., Vol. III: *The Lectures of 1825–1826* (London: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), p. 154. Cf. *ibid*., pp. 285–286:

> [O]f a truth there exists the One into which everything enters, in order to be absorbed therein, but out of which nothing comes. For as Spinoza set up the great proposition, all determination implies negation, and as of everything, even of thought in contrast to extension, it may be shown that it is determined and finite, what is essential in it rests upon negation.

[14] G. W. F. Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, trans. C. Butler (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), p. 96.

[15] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. G. Di Giovanni (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 87 (GW 21:101).

According to Hegel, Spinoza considers finite things as mere determinations, or negations, of the One, and things that are mere negations of the other cannot be said to have a genuine and independent existence. As a result, Hegel adopts Maimon's claim that the proper description of Spinoza's philosophy should be called acosmism, rather than atheism.[16]

(b) "Determination is Negation" as a slogan of Universal Dialectic. According to Michael Inwood, "Hegel endorses Spinoza's claim that 'determination is negation,' that is, that a thing or concept is determinate only in virtue of a contrast with other things or concepts, which are determined in a way that it is not."[17] Inwood's elegant formulation states the principle of Hegel's own dialectic, yet, as far I can see, it states a view Hegel thought Spinoza *should* have endorsed, though in fact, Spinoza fell short of doing so.

The main difference between the acosmist (*a*) and the dialectical (*b*) interpretations of the *determinatio negatio est* formula is that the latter, but not the former, makes the infinite and finite *mutually* negate each other. In other words, according to the dialectical reading of the formula, not only is the finite a determination, or negation, of the infinite, but also the infinite (or the indeterminate) is a negation of the finite. According to the acosmist reading, it is only finite things that are what they are by virtue of negating their opposition, but the dialectical reading expands the scope of the last principle and makes it universal: anything, either finite or infinite, is what it is by virtue of its opposition to what it is not.

Hegel frequently develops the dialectical reading of the formula as part of a critique of Spinoza's more restricted reading. In these cases, Hegel stresses that while Spinoza's discovery is truly important, his

[16] See Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, p. 49:

> In Spinoza's system God alone *is*. What is other than God is a being that at once is not a being, and so is show. Thus it cannot be said that Spinozism is atheism. It is rather the exact contrary of atheism, namely, *acosmism*. The world is no true being, there is no world. Rather, God and God alone is.

Cf. EL §50, and Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 281. Hegel probably came across Maimon's discussion of acosmism in K. P. Moritz's *Magazin zur Erfahrungsseelenkunde*, in which Maimon's *Lebensgeschichte* was originally published at the beginning of the 1790s. I am indebted to Professor Peter-Rolf Horstmann for this helpful suggestion.

[17] M. Inwood, *A Hegel Dictionary* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), p. 78. This reading of 'determination is negation' is very close to Fichte's "Law of reflective opposition" (*das Reflexionsgesez des Entgegensezens*): "it is only through opposition that it is possible to obtain a specific and clear consciousness of anything whatsoever" (J. G. Fichte, *Foundations of Transcendental Philosophy* (Wissenschaftslehre) *nova methodo,* trans. D. Breazeale [Ithaca, NY and London: Cornell University Press, 1992.], p. 116). For a helpful discussion of Fichte's law, see Franks, *All or Nothing*, p. 348.

understanding of the formula is one sided insofar as it fails to realize that there is an internal negativity in the very notion of the infinite. According to Hegel, Spinoza fails to realize that the infinite is essentially a negation of negation (i.e., a negation of the finite, which, Hegel claims, Spinoza acknowledges as being merely negative). Let us have a look at a few passages in which Hegel develops this critique of Spinoza.

"*Determinateness is negation*" is the absolute principle of Spinozist philosophy; this true and simple insight is at the basis of the absolute unity of substance. But Spinoza stops short at *negation* as *determinateness* or quality; he does not advance to the cognition of it as absolute, that is, *self-negating negation*.[18]

The Spinozistic determination of infinity, by which infinity is the unlimited affirmation of any matter, is one-sided, since it does not include infinity as negation of the negation. The true infinite is that which remains identical with itself through mediation.[19]

How precisely is the view of infinity as negation of negation (i.e., negation of the finite) related to *Spinoza's* understanding of *determinatio negatio est*? The following passage from Hegel's 1816 review of Jacobi's *Werke* seems to be crucial in this context. Notice that in the second sentence of the passage Hegel points out a major *shortcoming* of Spinoza's formula:

Everything depends here on the correct understanding of the status and significance of negativity. If it is taken only to be the determinateness of finite things (*omnis determinatio est negatio*), then we are already thinking of it outside of absolute substance and have allowed finite things to fall outside of it; our imagination maintains them *outside* of absolute substance. Conceived of in this way, however, negation fails to be seen as *internal to the infinite* or *internal to substance*, which is supposed rather to be the sublated being of finite things. – Yet the manner in which negation is internal to substance has in fact thus already been said … Substance is supposed to be the sublation of the finite, and that is just to say that it is the *negation of negation*, since it is precisely negation which we took to be definitive of the finite.[20]

Hegel's main point seems to be that one cannot introduce negations *arbitrarily* into the substance, unless they are already contained in the very notion of substance (in fact, nothing should be externally introduced into substance since substance is supposed to be self-sufficient). According to Hegel's reading, Spinoza's claim that finite things are mere

[18] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 472 (GW 11:376).
[19] Hegel, *Lectures on Logic*, p. 109.
[20] Hegel, *Heidelberg Writings*, pp. 8–9. Hegel continues the passage by arguing that negation of negation is the condition for the emergence of freedom and subjectivity. I do not address these crucial claims here owing to limitations of space.

negations of the infinite is inexplicable since Spinoza cannot explain the *origin* of these negations. Hegel frequently charges Spinoza with introducing modes and attributes arbitrarily without providing any explanation how they develop from the substance.[21] In a similar manner, Schelling argues, "one still naturally demands to know how these limitations of being get into [Spinoza's] God."[22] Since negation cannot be arbitrarily (or externally) introduced into the substance, the substance must contain it in its very essence. According to Hegel, this essential negative element of the substance is the negation of finite things (as negation of negation). As a result, one must expand the domain of the "every determination is negation" formula, and affirm that even the substance (the infinite) is also what it is by virtue of negating what it is not. In other words, negativity must not be "taken only to be the determinateness of finite things."[23]

(c) "Determination is negation" as the relation between finite things and the maximally *determined Being.* This reading, just like the acosmist reading (*a*), takes finite things to be limitations, or partial negations, of the infinite. Yet, by contrast with the acosmist reading, the infinite is here conceived as *maximally* determined (as opposed to the absolute *indeterminacy* of the infinite in the acosmist reading). The infinite, the archetype of all perfections, serves as the storehouse from which all other qualities are generated through limitation.[24] Several early modern philosophers advocated variants of this view,[25] though here I would like to suggest that none other than Kant endorsed it.

In the "Ideal of Pure Reason" chapter of the first *Critique*, Kant discusses the notion of the *ens realissimum*, an individual being whose concept contains "all of reality" (*omnitudo realitatis*). According to Kant, "all true negations are nothing but limits" of the *omnitudo realitatis*. Kant

[21] "[Substance, attribute, and mode] are only enumerated one after the other, without the inner chain of development, and the [mode] is not negation *as* negation" (Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 474 [GW 11:378]). Cf. Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. III, pp. 269, 273, 285. For an evaluation of the validity of this charge see Melamed, "Acosmism or Weak Individuals?"; and Y. Melamed, "Why Is Spinoza NOT an Eleatic Monist? Or Why Does Diversity Exist?," in P. Goff (ed.), *Spinoza on Monism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, forthcoming).

[22] F. W. J. Schelling, *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, trans. Andrew Bowie (Cambridge University Press, 1994), p. 67.

[23] Hegel, *Heidelberg Writings*, p. 8.

[24] Any proponent of this view must address the major problem of reconciling divine simplicity with an ascription of infinite determinations to God. Kant attempts (unsuccessfully, to my mind) to address this issue by suggestion that finite things are merely limitations of the *consequences* of the *ens realissimum* (see A579/B607).

[25] See, for example, C. von Wolff, *Theologia naturalis* (Frankfurt am Main, 1737), Part II, no. 92. Cf. A. Altmann, "Moses Mendelssohn on Leibniz and Spinoza," in Altmann, *Studies in Religious Philosophy and Mysticism* (London: Routledge, 1969), p. 249.

seems to be using the notion of reality in the particular sense of a "positive determination," following Baumgarten's definition: "Those things that are posited in something in determining it are *determinations*; some are positive and affirmative, which if they exist in fact are *reality*, while others are negative, which if they exist in fact are *negation*."[26] The concept of the *ens realissimum* is such that "of all possible opposed predicates, one, namely that which belongs absolutely to being [*Sein*], is encountered in its determination" (A576/B604). It is clear therefore that the *ens realissimum* cannot be indeterminate since, for an absolutely indeterminate being, there is no reason to attribute one predicate rather than its opposite.

Kant does not mention Spinoza's name in the "Ideal of Pure Reason" (or anywhere else in the *Critique of Pure Reason*); yet, oddly enough, he employs the very same analogy used by Spinoza in Ep. 50 to explain the relation between the *ens realissimum* and finite things.

> [A]ll negations (which are the sole predicates through which everything else is to be distinguished from the *ens realissimum*) are merely limitations of a greater, and finally of the highest reality; hence they presuppose it, and as regards their content they are merely derived from it. All manifoldness of things is only so many different ways of limiting the concept of the highest reality, which is their common substratum, *just as all figures are only possible as different ways of limiting infinite space*. (A578f./B606; my emphasis)[27]

In the lines that follow this passage, Kant stresses that we remain in complete ignorance regarding the *existence* of such a being, and that the limitation relation is merely a relation between an idea and certain concepts, and not a relation between actual objects. Yet, in a striking note in his lectures on metaphysics, Kant claims: "If I derive the existence [*Dasein*] of the *ens realissimum* from its concept, this is the path to Spinozism" (AA 28:786).[28] Similarly, in his unpublished Prize Essay from the early 1790s, Kant writes:

> All negations have to be regarded merely as limitations of the conceptual sum-total of realities [*Allinbegriffes der Realitäten*], and everything else but this one concept of their possibility as merely derived from it. This One which metaphysics – we wonder how – has now conjured up for itself, is the highest

[26] A. G. Baumgarten, *Metaphysics* §36, in E. Watkins (ed.), *Kant's Critique of Pure Reason: Background and Source Materials* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 94. The view of reality as positive determination (or perfection) and the opposition between reality and negation also appear in Spinoza. See E4pref, and Spinoza's claim (formulated, in fact, as a definition): "By perfection in general I shall understand reality" ("per perfectionem in genere realitatem intelligam"; E4pref); cf. E2d6.

[27] Cf. Jacobi, *Main Philosopical Writings*, p. 218.

[28] For further discussion of this passage see Omri Boehm's chapter in this volume, pp. 27–43.

metaphysical good. It contains the wherewithal for the creation of all other possible things, as the marble quarry does for statues of infinite diversity, which are all of them possible only through limitation … this metaphysical God (the *realissimum*) likewise falls very much under the suspicion (despite all protestations against Spinozism), that as a universally existing being [*einem All existirender Wesen*] He is identical with the universe.[29]

Although in these passages Kant does not refer explicitly to Spinoza's *determinatio negatio est* formula, there is little doubt in my mind that Kant was aware of the conceptual proximity between his *omnitudo realiattis* and Spinoza's notion of determination.

So far we have encountered at least three possible readings of the *determinatio negatio est* formula. We now turn to the author of the formula and inquire what he meant by it.

DETERMINATION AND NEGATION IN SPINOZA

According to the acosmist interpretation, all the determinations of God (such as attributes and modes) are mere negations of God (or the infinite), which in itself is absolutely indeterminate. What truly exists is just one indivisible and unmodified being, which is very similar to *tò ón* of the Eleatics.[30] We have seen that Jacobi, Maimon, and Hegel advocated this reading, and indeed several late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century Spinoza scholars inspired by Hegel followed the same path.[31]

The text of Ep. 50 (where the *determinatio negatio est* phrase actually appears) alone does not adequately substantiate this reading. As indicated

[29] I. Kant, *Theoretical Philosophy after 1781*, p. 390 (AA 20:303).

[30] See LHP, Vol. III, pp. 257–258; cf. LHP, Vol. I, p. 244, and LPR, Vol. I, p. 376.

[31] For Caird's and Joachim's Hegelian readings of Spinoza, see G. H. R. Parkinson, "Spinoza and British Idealism: The Case of H. H. Joachim," *British Journal of the History of Philosophy* 1 (1993), 109–123; and S. Newlands, "More Recent Idealist Readings of Spinoza," *Philosophy Compass* 6 (2011), 109–119. For an outstanding comparative study of monism in Bradley and Hegel see R.-P. Horstmann, *Ontologie und Relationen* (Hain: Athenäum, 1984), esp. pp. 107–168, 246–254. H. A. Wolfson belongs partly to that interpretive school, though Wolfson's motivation was somewhat different, i.e., he attempted to show that Spinoza continued medieval negative theology: "Substance is thus to Spinoza, like God to the medievals, absolutely simple, free from accidental as well as from essential attributes"; H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*, 2 vols., Vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1934), p. 116. Michael Della Rocca's chapter in this volume expresses great sympathy for the acosmist reading, though Della Rocca defends a more moderate view according to which modes are not illusory, but only partly real. That modes are only partly real (or are less real than the substance) is a view held clearly by both Spinoza and Descartes, and is hardly questionable (and thus should not be taken as supporting particularly the acosmist reading). Yet, Della Rocca also defends the bolder claim that, insofar as modes are only partly real, they are also only partly conceived, and *this* claim seems to be closer to the acosmist reading.

in the opening of that discussion ("With regard to the statement that figure is a negation and not anything positive"), Spinoza does not seem to make a principled claim there about the nature of determination. Yet, similar claims appear in several other texts of Spinoza. Proposition 8 of Part 1 of the *Ethics* asserts: "Every substance is necessarily infinite," and in the first Scholium to this proposition Spinoza attempts to motivate the proposition in the following way:

> Since being finite is really, in part, a negation, and being infinite is an absolute affirmation of the existence of some nature, it follows from P7[32] alone that every substance must be infinite.
>
> [Cum finitum esse revera sit ex parte negatio et infinitum absoluta affirmatio existentiae alicujus naturae, sequitur ergo ex sola prop. 7. Omnem substantiam debere esse infinitam.]

According to this passage, being finite is a partial negation of the infinite, or unlimited, existence of some nature. Since, in E1p5, Spinoza equates "nature" and "attribute," we can reasonably infer that being finite is a partial negation of some attribute. The appearance of the notion of "nature" in this Scholium creates a problem for the acosmist reading, since it seems to indicate that substance truly has an attribute that constitutes its nature.[33] Thus, this passage seems more consistent with our third reading, i.e., the view that every finite being is a partial negation of the maximally determined God.

Stronger support for the acosmist interpretation is provided by Ep. 36 (dating probably from 1666). In this letter, Spinoza replaces his common characterization of God as an "absolutely infinite" being with the similar, yet significantly different, notion of "absolutely *indeterminate*." Since this source is probably the best textual support for the acosmist interpretation, let us have a look at three key passages in this letter.

> It is a contradiction to conceive under the negation of existence something whose definition includes existence, or (what is the same) affirms existence. Since determinate denotes nothing positive, but only the privation of existence of that same nature which is conceived as determinate, it follows that that whose definition affirms existence cannot be conceived as determinate.
>
> [… quòd sit contradictio, aliquid, cujus definitio existentiam includit, aut (quod idem est) existentiam affirmat, sub negatione existentiae concipere. Et quoniam

[32] E1p7 reads: "It pertains to the nature of substance to exist."

[33] On the debate over whether Spinoza's attributes constitute the nature of substance or are merely subjectively conceived as such, see Y. Melamed, "The Building Blocks of Spinoza's Metaphysics: Substance, Attributes, and Modes," in M. Della Rocca (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Spinoza* (Oxford University Press, forthcoming)," Part 11.

determinatum nihil positivi; sed tantùm privationem existentiae ejusdem naturae, quae determinata concipitur, denotat; sequitur id, cujus definitio existentiam affirmat, non determinatum posse concipi.] (G IV/184/10–15).

[I]f we suppose that something which is *indeterminate* and perfect *in its own kind* exists by its own sufficiency [*quod in suo genere solummodò indeterminatum, & perfectum est, suâ sufficientiâ existere*], then we must also grant the existence of a being which is *absolutely indeterminate* and perfect [*entis absolutè indeterminati*]. This being I shall call God. For example, if we are willing to maintain that Extension and Thought exist by their own sufficiency, we shall have to admit the existence of God who is *absolutely* perfect, that is, the existence of a being who is *absolutely indeterminate* (G IV/185/11–19)

Since God's nature does not consist in one definite kind of being [*Dei natura in certo entis genere non consistit*], but in a being which is absolutely indeterminate, his nature also demands all that which perfectly expresses being [*omne, quod tò esse perfectè exprimit*]; otherwise his nature would be determinate and deficient. This being so, it follows that there can be only one Being, God, which exists by its own force. (G IV/185/30–34)[34]

Unfortunately, we do not have the letter by John Hudde to which this letter, as well as Ep. 34 and 35, respond. Yet, the content of Spinoza's response shows that Hudde was not convinced by Spinoza's argument that there can be only one substance.[35]

There is some tension in the letter between the claim that God is absolutely indeterminate (which seems strongly to support the acosmist reading), and Spinoza's talk of Extension and Thought having a certain *nature* and each constituting a *kind.* Spinoza seems here to equate nature, attribute, and kind. If Extension and Thought truly constitute distinct kinds or natures, and if each exists by its own sufficiency, then it is not clear how they can be mere illusions[36] or external determinations (as the acosmist reading contends). Furthermore, the evidential force of Ep. 36 is

[34] Ep. 36; my emphasis.

[35] "[Y]our difficulty remains quite unresolved, namely as to why there are not several beings existing through themselves but of different natures" (G IV/185/5).

[36] Unlike some commentators, I take Hegel's charge of acosmism to imply that the plurality of attributes and modes is illusory, and not just less real than substance, or having merely derivative existence. Consider the following texts: "Parmenides has to reckon with *illusion* and opinion, the opposites of being and truth; Spinoza likewise, with attributes, modes, extension, movement, understanding, will, and so on" (my emphasis; Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 98); "No truth at all is ascribed to finite things or the world as a whole in [Spinoza's] philosophy" (G. W. F. Hegel, *The Encyclopaedia Logic*, ed. and trans. T. F. Geraets, W. A. Suchtig, and H. S. Harris [Indianapolis: Hackett, 1991], p. 227 [§151a]); "[T]he understanding is ranked by Spinoza only among *affections*, and *as such has no truth*" (my emphasis; Hegel, *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Vol. III, p. 269; cf. pp. 280–1, 288). For further textual support, see Melamed, "Acosmism or Weak Individuals?," p. 81 n. 18.

somewhat undermined by the fact that the extant text is a mere translation of the lost original; in translation, "infinite" could easily be replaced by "indeterminate."

At this point we could perhaps conclude that, overall, Ep. 36 provides some support in favor of the acosmist reading. Yet, with a more careful look, it seems that the third passage above contains a phrase that is hard to reconcile with the acosmist interpretation. At the end of the first sentence of the third paragraph, Spinoza claims that the nature of the absolutely indeterminate "demands *all* that which perfectly expresses being" ("omne, quod tò esse perfectè exprimit"). This statement clearly requires the *inclusion*, rather than *exclusion*, of all attributes. In light of this statement, I believe we should conclude that these important passages from Ep. 36 are far more consistent with the third interpretation than with the acosmist reading.

At this point I would like to point out that there are several important considerations emerging from texts other than Ep. 36 that tell against the acosmist reading.[37] In the following, I summarize very briefly some of the main problems with this reading.

(1) *Third kind of knowledge*. The third kind of knowledge "proceeds from an adequate idea of the formal essence of certain attributes to the adequate knowledge of the essence of things" (E2p40s2). Spinoza's discussion of the third kind of knowledge in Part v of the *Ethics* makes clear that it pertains to the knowledge of *finite* modes – such as our bodies and minds – as well (see, for example, E5p22 and E5p31). But if the finite modes were mere illusions, why would they be the objects of the (adequate) third kind of knowledge?

(2) *E1p36*. In E1p16, Spinoza claims that the modes are just what follow necessarily from God's nature or essence. In E1p36, Spinoza argues that everything, including God's nature, *must* have some effects ("Nothing exists from whose nature some effect does not follow"[38]). But, if the modes (i.e., the effects of God's nature) were illusory, then God's nature would not really have any effects.[39]

[37] For a more detailed discussion, see my "Acosmism or Weak Individuals?," Part iii.

[38] "Nihil existit, ex cujus natura aliquis effectus non sequatur." This (mostly neglected) proposition states a principle that should properly be termed "the principle of sufficient effect": everything must have an effect (and not only a cause, as the principle of sufficient reason stipulates).

[39] See G. H. R. Parkinson, "Hegel, Pantheism and Spinoza," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977), 449–459 [p. 455]) for a similar argument. This argument is somewhat less conclusive since *natura naturans* could perhaps just cause itself and thus satisfy E1p36. See, however, my "Why Is Spinoza NOT an Eleatic Monist?" for an explanation of why Spinoza could not accept a world in which *natura naturata* does not exist while *natura naturans* causes itself.

(3) *The parallelism among the attributes*. In E2p7s, Spinoza argues that the order and connection of causes in all attributes is the same.[40] This doctrine directly contradicts the acosmist reading of Spinoza, insofar as it clearly asserts the existence of a plurality of entities. Simply put, were Spinoza's substance a singular, undifferentiated entity, no plurality would obtain, and it would be pointless to speak of any "order" or "connection" among things.

(4) *Knowledge of God via knowledge of finite nature*. In the fourth chapter of the TTP, Spinoza claims "we acquire a greater and more perfect knowledge of God as we gain more knowledge of natural things [*res naturales*]" (TTP III/60).[41] If finite things ("natural things") were merely illusory, it would make little sense that by engaging with such illusions we could promote our knowledge of God. Spinoza continues by making the point even more explicit: "To put it another way, since the knowledge of an effect through its cause is nothing other than the knowledge of the property of that cause [*causae proprietatem aliquam cognoscere*], the greater our knowledge of natural things, the more perfect is our knowledge of God's essence, which is the cause of all things" (TTP III/60/11–12). Knowledge of finite things increases our knowledge of God, since these finite things are nothing but God's properties (or rather, *propria*), which follow from God's essence.[42] Granting such an elevated status to finite things (i.e., being properties of God) is hardly consistent with viewing them as illusions.

(5) *"Falls under the intellect."* In E1p16, Spinoza equates the *infinita infinitis modis*, which follow from God's essence, with "everything which can fall under an infinite intellect" [*omnia, quae sub intellectum infinitum cadere possunt*]. For Spinoza, the only cause of error is the imagination, while the perceptions of the intellect are always adequate (E2p41). Thus, what "falls under" the intellect cannot be an illusion.[43]

(6) *Only nothingness has no properties*. Spinoza subscribes to the view that reality comes in degrees and, like Descartes, he accepts that

[40] "[W]hether we conceive nature under the attribute of Extension, or under the attribute of Thought, or under any other attribute, we shall find one and the same order, or one and the same connection of causes, i.e., that the same things follow one another."

[41] Translation modified. Spinoza makes similar claims in several other texts. See, for example, E5p24.

[42] On Spinoza's modes as God's *propria*, see Y. Melamed, "Spinoza's Metaphysics of Substance: The Substance–Mode Relation as a Relation of Inherence and Predication," *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 78 (2009), 17–82, §6.

[43] Furthermore, in E1p16d Spinoza insinuates that the intellect infers [*concludit*] the modes.

only nothingness has no properties;[44] the more reality or being [*esse*] a thing has, the more properties or attributes belong to it (E1p10s and E1p16d). Since God is real, it must have properties. In fact, since God is absolutely infinite and most real, it must have infinitely many attributes.[45]

(7) *Everything in common with created things*. In Letter 4 Spinoza responds to Henry Oldenburg's claim that "God has nothing formally in common with created things." This view seems to be quite close to the acosmist reading (and to negative theology), since it denies of God all the qualities we regularly know. Spinoza's response to this suggestion is straightforward: "I have maintained the complete opposite of this in my definition. For I have said that God is a Being consisting of infinite attributes, of which each is infinite, or supremely perfect in its kind" (G IV/14/13–16). The complete opposite of Oldenburg's claim seems to be that "God has *everything* formally in common with finite things," and this is hardly consistent with the view of God as having no qualities.

In light of all the texts and considerations we have discussed so far, I believe we have to reject the acosmist interpretation in spite of its great charm and boldness.

Let us turn now to the dialectical reading of *omnis determinatio est negatio* and consider whether Spinoza accepts the claim that "a thing or concept is determinate only by virtue of a contrast with other things or concepts, which are determined in a way that it is not."

As we saw earlier, Hegel thought Spinoza *should have* endorsed, but did not actually endorse, the dialectical reading of the formula. Hegel was right in realizing that Spinoza did not mean the *determinatio* formula in its dialectical reading, but was probably unaware that this was not a coincidental omission on Spinoza's part – the dialectal reading conflicts explicitly with some of Spinoza's deepest metaphysical principles.

For Spinoza, there is a clear asymmetry between the infinite and finite: the finite is generated by a negation of the infinite, but not the other way around (i.e., the infinite is not generated by negating the finite).[46] Thus,

[44] See Letter 9 (G IV/44/34–45/25); and DPP 1:52.

[45] See E1p10s; and Letter 9 (G IV/44/34–45/25).

[46] Cf. Descartes' similar claim in the Third Meditation:

> And I must not think that, just as my conceptions of rest and darkness are arrived at by negating movement and light, so my perception of the infinite is arrived at not by means of a true idea but merely by negating the finite. On the contrary, I clearly understand that there is more reality in

in the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*, Spinoza stresses that one cannot read metaphysics from grammar,[47] and that terms that are grammatically negative frequently denote affirmative qualities.

> [T]he names given to things that are only in the intellect, and not in the imagination, are often negative (for example, infinite, incorporeal, etc.) … they express negatively many things that are really affirmative, and conversely (for example, uncreated, independent, infinite, immortal). Because the contraries of these are much more easily imagined, they occurred first to the earliest men [*primis hominibus*], and they used positive names. We affirm and deny many things because the nature of words – not the nature of things – allows us to affirm them. And in our ignorance of this, we easily take something false to be true.[48]

Similarly, in the *Cogitata metaphysica*, Spinoza notes, "God's *infinity*, in spite of what the term suggests, is something most positive" (*Dei Infinitas, invito vocabulo, sit quid maximè positivum*").[49] According to the passage above from the TIE, we are accustomed to talking about infinity as a negative term, since we can easily *imagine* finitude, while it is difficult to imagine infinity. Thus, language works at the service of the imagination, which, according to Spinoza, "is the only source of error" (E2p41). The intellect, unlike the imagination, conceives infinity adequately as something affirmative, but since conceiving things through the intellect is far more difficult than through the imagination, our linguistic practices follow the imagination.

We see now that one major difference between the systems of Spinoza and Hegel is that for Hegel, everything, *even the absolute*, is what it is also by virtue of negating what it is not, whereas for Spinoza, God, or the infinite, is purely affirmative (and is *not* what it is by virtue of negating the finite). This point leads us to another important and closely related deep disagreement between the two systems. For Spinoza, "the proper Order of Philosophizing" is to *begin* with God (E2p10s2). According to Spinoza, a philosophy that begins with finite things and then ascends to the infinite, God, inverts the order of knowledge, and thus leads to complete misunderstanding of both God and finite things.[50] Hegel clearly

> an infinite substance than in a finite one, and hence that my perception of the infinite, that is God, is in some way prior to my perception of the finite, that is myself. (AT VII:45; CSM II:31)

[47] On the misleading and imaginary nature of language according to Spinoza, see D. Savan, "Spinoza and Language," *Philosophical Review* 67 (1958), 212–225. While I agree with Savan's main claim, I believe it needs to be moderated and qualified.

[48] TIE §89.

[49] CM II.iii; G I/253/33.

[50] See E2p10s2. The main motivation behind this bold view of Spinoza's is his strict commitment to the claim that one must know the cause in order to know the effect (E1a4). Given that God's essence is the cause of all things, knowledge must begin with it. For a more detailed discussion

appreciates the boldness of this view, which he describes as "profound and correct."[51] Yet, in his lengthy remark on Spinoza's philosophy in the *Science of Logic*, Hegel targets precisely this point: "The absolute cannot be a first, an immediate. Essentially the absolute is rather its result" ("[D]as Absolute kann nicht ein Erstes, Unmittelbares sein, sondern das Absolute ist wesentlich sein Resultat").[52] In Hegel's logic, there is a circle whose end is identical to the beginning, though in a more elevated level. Spinoza, however, would strongly object to any attempt to cast God in the image of anything other than God, and would consider the enrichment of the absolute through the cycle of Hegel's logic just as such. Hegel seems to be aware of this crucial point, as he persistently complains that Spinoza refuses to make God into a *person*.[53]

Are *finite* things, according to Spinoza, determined by negating their opposites? We have seen Spinoza's claim in E1p8s1 that finite things are in part negations, presumably of one of the attributes ("the existence of some nature"), i.e., negations of the infinite. But do finite things determine the essence of *each other* through mutual negations? Consider the following claim from E3p54: "The Mind's essence (as is known through itself) affirms only what the Mind is and can do, *not what it is not and cannot do*" (my emphasis). Presumably, Spinoza's bracketed remark – "as is known through itself" – indicates that essences *in general* assert what a thing is and can do and not what it is not and cannot do.[54] Indeed, in E1p17s Spinoza claims, "a man is the cause of the existence of another man, but not of his essence, for the latter is an eternal truth" (G II/63/18). Thus, my parents are the causes (or are among the causes) of my existence, but not of my essence. Spinoza's claim in E1p17s seems to imply that particular things do not determine the essence of one another since they do not cause the essence of one another.

A text supporting the same conclusion somewhat more explicitly appears in §101 of the *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect*: "The essences of singular, changeable things are not to be drawn from their

of Spinoza's claim regarding the "Order of Philosophizing" in E2p10s2, see Y. Melamed, review of M. Ayers (ed.), *Rationalism, Platonism, and God*, *Notre Dame Philosophical Reviews*, February 24, 2009.

[51] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 462 (GW 11:376).

[52] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 463 (GW 11:376–377). Cf. Hegel's review of Jacobi's *Werke*: "For since *God* is the result, the mediation in question immediately reveals itself to be a mediation which sublates itself in that result" (Hegel, *Heidelberg Writings*, p. 11).

[53] See, for example, Hegel's *Science of Logic*, p. 462 (GW 11:376).

[54] Otherwise, if this point were restricted only to the mind, Spinoza should have substantiated the claim by a reference to a previous proposition discussing the nature of the mind.

series, or order of existing, since it offers us nothing but extrinsic denominations, relations, or at most, circumstances [*denominationes extrinsecas, relationes, aut ad summum circumstantias*], all of which are far from the inmost essence of things." While the "order of existing [*ordine existendi*]" refers to essences having duration, and not to essences that are eternal or formal,[55] it seems that we can still infer from this passage that for Spinoza "extrinsic denominations and relations" cannot determine the essence of particular things. Insofar as mutual negation is an extrinsic denomination, it would seem that particular things cannot determine the essence of one another.

Thus far we have seen several texts that indicate that, for Spinoza, finite things do not determine the *essence* of each other through mutual negation.[56] Is there *any* sense in which particular things determine each other for Spinoza? Yes. Particular things determine the *durational existence* of each other – they determine the beginning and end of the period in which things endure – since the essence of each finite thing does not determine or limit its existence.[57] One of Spinoza's most central doctrines states: "No thing can be destroyed except through an external cause" (E3p4). Spinoza develops the implications of this crucial claim in E3p8:

E3p8: The striving by which each thing strives to persevere in its being involves no finite time, but an indefinite time.

Dem.: For if [the striving by which a thing strives to persevere in its being] involved a limited time, which determined the thing's duration, then it would follow just from that very power by which the thing exists that it could not exist after that limited time, but that it would have to be destroyed. But (by P4) this is absurd. Therefore, the striving by which a thing exists involves no definite time. On the contrary, since (by P4) it will always continue to exist by the same power by which it now exists, *unless it is destroyed by an external cause*, this striving involves indefinite time, q.e.d. (My italics)

[55] For the distinction between formal essences and essences having duration, see E2p8. Cf. D. Garrett, "Spinoza on the Essence of the Human Body and the Part of the Mind that Is Eternal," in O. Koistinen (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Spinoza's Ethics* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 284–302.

[56] Another text that provides some support for this conclusion is E1p8s2: "the true definition of each thing neither involves nor expresses *anything except* the nature of the thing defined" (my emphasis). Assuming that the determination relation is transitive, it would seem that if one allows for the negation of a particular thing x to be included in the essence of x, this essence would have to expand indefinitely and, by virtue of transitivity, also include all the negations of the particular things that negate x. This does not seem to be consistent with the above passage from E1p8s2.

[57] See E4pref (G II/209/6): "the duration of things cannot be determined from their essence, since the essence of things involves no certain and determinate time of existing."

Things cannot *expire* by virtue of their essence. The duration of finite things must be externally limited since the essence of a thing (either finite or infinite) always affirms and supports the continuation of the thing's existence. Thus there must be some causes external to the essence (and ultimately external to the thing) in order to bring a finite thing to its demise. Here is how Spinoza demonstrates E3p4:

> E3p4: No thing can be destroyed except through an external cause.
>
> Dem.: This Proposition is evident through itself. For the definition of any thing affirms, and does not deny, the thing's essence, or it posits the thing's essence, and does not take it away. So while we attend only to the thing itself, and not to external causes, we shall not be able to find anything in it which can destroy it, q.e.d.

For Spinoza, the definition of a thing states its essence, and in this passage Spinoza argues that the essence, or definition, of a thing cannot bring about its destruction. Notice the strength Spinoza ascribes to this proposition: it is "evident through itself," just like an axiom or an eternal truth. In another place, Spinoza suggests that violation of this principle is "as impossible as that something should come from nothing".[58]

Relying on E3p4, Spinoza states his celebrated *conatus* doctrine: "E3p6: Each thing, as far as it can by its own power, strives to persevere in its being" (*Unaquaeque res, quantum in se est, in suo esse perseverare conatur*".[59] Variants of E3p4 appear in almost all of Spinoza's writings.[60] The first Appendix to the *Short Treatise*, one of Spinoza's earliest works, is apparently a very early draft of the opening of the *Ethics*. The sixth axiom of this Appendix reads: "What is a cause of itself could not possibly have limited itself" ("Dat gene 't welk een oorzaak is van zig zelfs, is onmogelyk dat het zig zelfs zoude hebben bepaald"). The axiom seems to be a restriction, or application, of Spinoza's general principle barring self-limitation. Why Spinoza specifies here the *causa sui* as that which cannot limit itself is an interesting question that cannot be properly addressed here.[61] It is clear, however, that by the time Spinoza wrote the final versions of the *Ethics*, he rejected the possibility of any self-limitation or self-negation.

[58] E4p20s. I suspect that in E4p20s Spinoza is even alluding to the possibility of *reducing* the *conatus* doctrine to the *ex nihilo nihil fit*, but this issue cannot be discussed here.

[59] For an excellent study of this doctrine, see D. Garrett, "Spinoza's *Conatus* Argument," in O. Koistinen and J. I. Biro (eds.), *Spinoza: Metaphysical Themes* (Oxford University Press, 2002), pp. 127–158.

[60] See, for example, CM II:xii (I/278/10); KV I:i (I/18/14), I:ii (I/20/16); KV II:xxvi (I/110/15).

[61] I suspect that this axiom might have had the Kabbalistic–Lurianic doctrine of divine self-limitation (*zimzum*) as a target. I hope to discuss this issue on another occasion.

The essence of no thing, finite or infinite, can negate, limit, or destroy the thing. Here, I believe, lies the deepest incongruity between the systems of Hegel and Spinoza. While for Hegel self-negation is the primary engine that brings about the unfolding of the system and the transition from one category to another, for Spinoza self-negation is a simple anathema. We have seen that Hegel scolds Spinoza for "not advancing to the cognition of [negation] as absolute, that is, *self-negating negation*."[62] Indeed, Spinoza does not allow for self-negation, but this is a principled view, and not a coincidental omission. It is noteworthy that in his numerous detailed discussions of Spinoza, Hegel hardly ever addressed either the *conatus* doctrine or E3p4.

Before we turn to summarize our discussion of the dialectical reading of the *determinatio* formula let me address very briefly the issue of the two philosophers' attitudes toward the law of non-contradiction. Hegel is frequently charged with rejecting the law of non-contradiction.[63] Spinoza accepts the law without any reservation, yet alludes to a different view that seems just as bold as Hegel's alleged rejection of the law, i.e., that the law of non-contradiction is *not primitive*, but rather derived from a more basic principle. Consider E3p5:

> Things are of a contrary nature, i.e., cannot be in the same subject, insofar as one can destroy the other [*Res eatenus contrariae sunt naturae, hoc est eatenus in eodem subjecto esse nequeunt, quatenus una alteram potest destruere*.]
>
> Dem.: For if they could agree with one another, or be in the same subject at once [*simul esse possent*], then there could be something in the same subject which could destroy it, which (by P4) is absurd. Therefore, things etc., q.e.d.

The formulation of the proposition and its demonstration (i.e., the use of the logical term *subjectum* and the stress that contraries cannot be in the same subject *at the same time* [*simul*]), are reminiscent of Aristotle's classical formulation of the law of non-contradiction. Yet, oddly enough, in the demonstration Spinoza seems to provide a *justification* of why contradictions are impossible: *because* the contradictory elements in the subject would cause the subject's destruction, while destruction (per E3p4)

[62] Hegel, *Science of Logic*, p. 472 (GW 11:376).

[63] For a helpful discussion of the debate surrounding this issue, see R.-P. Horstmann, "Schwierigkeiten und Voraussetzungen der dialektischen Philosophie Hegels," in Horstmann (ed.), *Seminar: Dialektik in der Philosophie Hegels* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978), pp. 9–30. I will not enter into his debate here, though I think this charge is partly true. I take Hegel's attitude toward the law of non-contradiction as typical Hegelian sublation. He wishes to preserve the law in order to make necessary transgressions force us to repel from one category to another.

cannot originate from an internal source. Does Spinoza take E3p4 to be the ground of the law of non-contradiction? Can one make sense of E3p4 without first assuming the law of non-contradiction? I cannot properly address these questions here, yet the appeal to E3p4 in order to justify the impossibility of contradiction seems to hint in this rather bold direction.

Turning now to the summary of our discussion of the dialectic interpretation of the formula, we can conclude that Spinoza could not endorse this reading since, unlike Hegel, he did not believe that God is what it is (infinite) by virtue of negating what it is not (finite). It also seems that for Spinoza finite things mutually determine the durational existence, but not the essence, of each other. Finally, and most crucially, Spinoza could not follow Hegel's suggestion that all things must contain self-negation, since Spinoza considered self-negation a strict impossibility.

Is the third reading of the *determinatio* formula – i.e., that finite things are negations of the *maximally* determinate infinite being – consistent with Spinoza's claims? I believe the answer is positive. Recall Spinoza's assertion in E1p8s2 that "being finite is really, in part, a negation, and being infinite is an absolute affirmation of the existence of some nature." I suggested earlier that Spinoza's talk of "the absolute affirmation of some nature" is a reference to the *attributes*, since Spinoza frequently identifies the nature and attribute of a thing. Thus, for example, in E1p5 Spinoza presents the two as interchangeable in the *naturae sive attributi*. If we understand 'nature' in E1p8s2 as referring to an attribute, we get the following picture: the attributes, each being infinite, are absolute affirmations of some nature, while finite things are partial negations of the attribute, or nature, to which they belong. This view of the attributes as absolute affirmations appears at the very opening of the *Ethics*, when Spinoza stresses that God is absolutely infinite, i.e., that "whatever expresses essence and *involves no negation* pertains to its essence" (E1d6e; my italics). Only attributes "pertain to God's essence," since modes belong to *natura naturata*, not *natura naturans*. According to E1d6, the attributes are such that "each one expresses an eternal and infinite essence." Thus, we can conclude that the phrase "whatever expresses essence and involves no negation" in E1d6e must refer to the attributes.[64] This view fits nicely our reading of E1p8s2, which suggests that finite things are just partial negations or limitations

[64] There is some internal tension in E1d6e, since the beginning of the *explicatio* asserts that it is possible to deny [*negare*] infinite attributes from what is infinite in its own kind, while the end of the explication implies that each attribute "involves no negation." It is commonly assumed that the attributes are infinite in their own kind, but if so, it would seem that the beginning of the *explicatio* affirms, while the end denies, that attributes negate *each other*.

of the existence expressed by the attributes. This view has precedence in Descartes, of which Spinoza was clearly aware,[65] and thus I believe should be confirmed as the adequate interpretation of the *determinatio* formula.

CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have argued that the famous *omnis determinatio est negatio* slogan which Hegel attributed to Spinoza was read in more than one way among his contemporaries. I have distinguished among three different interpretations of the formula, and examined the validity of each interpretation. Surprisingly, in spite of Kant's expressed hostility toward Spinoza's philosophy, his latent use of the formula turned out to be closer to Spinoza's claims than Hegel's enthusiastic adoption of the slogan. Hegel was clearly an insightful and acute reader of Spinoza, yet the Spinoza he adopted, as much as the Spinoza he rejected, was baptized in the ether of Hegel's own system.

[65] See DPP1d8: "The substance which we understand to be through itself supremely perfect, and in which we conceive nothing which involves any defect or limitation of perfection, is called God."

CHAPTER 11

Thought and metaphysics: Hegel's critical reception of Spinoza

Dean Moyar

In this chapter I examine Hegel's criticisms of Spinoza in order to address the ongoing dispute about Hegel and metaphysics. This debate is consistently framed in terms that refer to Spinoza as a philosopher with a robust metaphysical view. The assumption is that if Hegel is shown to be closer to Spinoza than to Kant, his view should be considered metaphysical.[1] By examining Hegel's criticism of Spinoza, focusing especially on the relation between thought and substance, I clarify some of the central issues in the debate over Hegel's metaphysics and situate his position on metaphysics in relation to both Spinoza and Kant.

The basic issue in Hegel's critical comments on Spinoza, and indeed for thinking through a meaningful contrast with the metaphysical tradition, is the relation of *thought* and *substance*. I take it that the textual evidence is overwhelming that for Hegel thought is the measure of the real, of what counts as actual and necessary. But recognizing this does not in fact decide the metaphysical question. Although there is a short road from the primacy of thought to a non-metaphysical view of Hegel as concerned with the conditions of human thought, there are ancient and modern metaphysicians par excellence (Aristotle, Descartes) who give thought a very central place, and there is a plausible case to be made that Hegel belongs in this strong metaphysical tradition.

I will not in this chapter be concerned with the *accuracy* of Hegel's criticisms of Spinoza. I will *assume* that Hegel's criticisms are largely correct, even though recent work on Spinoza has brought out some of the problems with Hegel's reading and some of the ways in which Spinoza is

I would like to thank John Brandau, Eckart Förster, James Kreines, and Yitzhak Melamed for helpful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter.

[1] A recent exception is J. Kreines, "Hegel: Metaphysics without Pre-Critical Monism," *Bulletin of the Hegel Society of Great Britain* (2008), 48–70.

more of an idealist than Hegel took him to be.[2] The contrasts that Hegel thought he could draw between Spinoza's positions and his own are the subject of this chapter, for it is largely those contrasts that Hegel used to mark out his own distinctive contribution to the metaphysical tradition.

THE DEBATE OVER HEGEL AND METAPHYSICS

One wonders what the last four decades of Hegel scholarship would have been like if Klaus Hartmann, instead of calling his essay "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View," had called it "Hegel: An Ontology of Thought." For there are two sides to Hartmann's essay, and it is attention only to the non-metaphysical label that has fostered the impression that Hartmann's "category theory" reading of Hegel's Logic[3] must ignore Hegel's statements of his systematic aims. Yet Hartmann is quite true to these ambitious aims when he writes that "what Hegel wishes to give is an account of the determinations of the real, or of what is,"[4] and that the Logic is "an ontology of thought as the ground for categories,"[5] and finally that "the virtue of Hegel's philosophy is that it offers a comprehensive scheme of explanation for the world's 'what.'"[6] These claims certainly give the impression that Hartmann does not wish to downplay the all-encompassing character of Hegel's philosophy.

There is a *limitation* that Hartmann ascribes to Hegel in labeling him a category theorist, namely that we are limited to the element of thought. So Hartmann claims that "We could not account for being in terms other than those of thought,"[7] and "the mind's reference to being can be discussed, this side of being, only in thought."[8] Hartmann's "the mind's reference" and "can be discussed" do invite confusion, since he can seem to be simply assuming that we cannot go beyond the theater of the mind or the terms of language. His *least misleading* definition of the non-metaphysical comes in the following passage: "There need be no anchorage in existences by-passing categorization or understanding, in order to make ontology possible. Or, there need be no metaphysics."[9] This non-metaphysical interpretation amounts to the claim that Hegel holds

[2] See Y. Melamed, "Acosmism or Weak Individuals? Hegel, Spinoza, and the Reality of the Finite," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 44 (2010), 77–92; M. Della Rocca, *Spinoza* (London: Routledge, 2008); and Della Rocca's chapter in this volume.

[3] When I speak of the "Logic" I am referring to Hegel's logic as presented in the *Science of Logic* and the *Encyclopedia Logic*.

[4] K. Hartmann, "Hegel: A Non-Metaphysical View," in A. MacIntyre (ed.), *Hegel: A Collection of Critical Essays* (University of Notre Dame Press, 1972), p. 103.

[5] *Ibid*., p. 111. [6] *Ibid*., p. 114. [7] *Ibid*., p. 108. [8] *Ibid*., p. 115. [9] *Ibid*., p. 117.

that we cannot *account for* the real in a way that bypasses thought and its concepts.

How much of a limitation is this? If we assume a realm outside thought – a realm of genuine existence or reality – that competes with Hegel's categories, Hartmann's non-metaphysical claim can seem like quite a serious limitation. Unfortunately Hartmann at times seems to make just this assumption, such as when he writes that Hegel's view is "non-metaphysical because devoid of existence claims and innocent of a reductionism opting for certain existences to the detriment of others."[10] Since existence is itself a category in Hegel's Logic, it is misleading to write about "existence claims" as if we can think naively about existence after Hegel's treatment of it in the Logic. It is also misleading to contrast Hegel's position with "reductionism," for though Hegel is generally opposed to reductionism of one level of being to another, he makes plenty of claims about categorical determination of the real that will fit some sense of the term "reductionism." Hartmann's own "ontology of thought" claim implies that thought originally constitutes the real, so to contrast thought with some more full-blown conception of existence or knowledge is wrong by Hartmann's own lights. This mistake is the source of some of Hartmann's deflationary claims, such as when he writes that "Hegel's position in the *Logic* is an innocuous one, as it cannot possibly conflict with knowledge,"[11] and "Hegel's claim appears, contrary to a metaphysical interpretation of his philosophy, as a very modest one. His achievement is seen to lie in a hermeneutic of categories."[12] These references to the innocuous and modest are unfortunate, not least because they diverge so greatly from Hegel's own pronouncements about philosophy's ability to comprehend the world as rational.

The essential point of Hartmann's reading can be captured with what I call the *Concept Dependence* thesis:

> *Concept Dependence* (*CD*) The only way to account for the-world's-what[13] is through our concepts.

There are a number of ambiguities in this basic formulation, ambiguities that led to the confusion in Hartmann's position and in much of the subsequent debate. We can see Hartmann as going back and forth between

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 110. [11] *Ibid.*, p. 109. [12] *Ibid.*, p. 124.

[13] I use this phrase of Hartmann's precisely because it is so unnatural. We need a neutral placeholder here, which means that none of the terms that appear in Hegel's Logic is appropriate (such as being, reality, actuality, necessity, substance, objectivity, etc.).

two versions of the thesis, one that highlights our *access* to being through concepts and another that holds that being is *constituted* through our concepts.

Access Concept Dependence (*ACD*) Our only route of access to the-world's-what is through our concepts.

Constitutive Concept Dependence (*CCD*) The-world's-what is constituted through our concepts.

This is a contrast between an *epistemic* claim (taking access as a relationship of knowing) and an *ontological* claim (the dependence of the-world's-what itself on our concepts). While commentators of all stripes hold *ACD*, the traditional metaphysical line does not take *CCD* as primary. It is oriented instead by the Spinozist *Substance Dependence* thesis.

Substance Dependence (*SD*) The-world's-what stems from a single all-encompassing substance that is prior to and the source of our concepts.

Sometimes the metaphysical readers say that substance (or God) is not transcendent but rather immanent, meaning that substance is revealed and instantiated within human concepts or practice. They thereby bring *SD* and *CCD* quite close, holding that God is the source or guarantor of our constitutive conceptual activity. Hartmann's reading has an element of *CCD*, but in his more deflationary pronouncements he tends to emphasize *ACD* and thereby clouds some of the main issues.

In *Hegel's Idealism*, Robert Pippin advocates a Kantian reading of Hegel that clearly distinguishes *ACD* and *CCD*, and that affirms *CCD* against *SD*. Pippin gives the following characterization of the traditional metaphysical view that accepts *SD*: "the essential point of the 'metaphysical' Hegel has always been that Hegel should be understood as a kind of inverted Spinozist, that is, a monist, who believed that finite objects did not 'really' exist (only the Absolute Idea exists), that this One was not a 'substance' but a 'subject'."[14] In opposition to this "inverted Spinozist view," Pippin's basic line is that Hegel largely accepts Kant's critique of metaphysics and defends a version of Kant's argument for pure concepts grounded in the unity of apperception. With his rejection of intellectual intuition, Kant clearly endorses *ACD*, and with his doctrine of the pure categories argues in favor of a version of *CCD*. But Kant's version of *CCD*

[14] R. Pippin, *Hegel's Idealism: The Satisfactions of Self-Consciousness* (Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 4.

is rather weak, given that he leaves open the possibility of an order of being (things-in-themselves) beyond our concepts. One of Pippin's main goals is to understand how Hegel could go further than Kant in arguing for the self-determining character of thought and subjectivity, and yet could still think that this limitation to thought was not a limitation vis-à-vis objectivity and truth.

Kant's transcendental idealism and Hegel's more strongly constitutive view show that we can distinguish several versions of *CCD*. These are:

Weakly Constitutive Concept Dependence (*WCCD*) We can only constitute the-world's-what through our concepts and other subjective conditions, though the-world's-what could be otherwise constituted.

Moderately Constitutive Concept Dependence (*MCCD*) The-world's-what is necessarily constituted through our concepts, though there are other conditions that can also jointly (together with concepts) constitute the-world's-what.

Strongly Constitutive Concept Dependence (*SCCD*) The-world's-what is constituted by our concepts, and only by our concepts.

The *WCCD* position is intended to represent Kant's position in the *Critique of Pure Reason*, while *SCCD* is supposed to represent one branch of the classical rationalist metaphysics that Kant critiqued. The *MCCD* position is vague, with its indefinite reference to "other conditions," and at this point it is just intended to mark out a middle ground between the two clear alternatives. Pippin's Kantian reading of Hegel clearly shies away from *WCCD*, holding that Hegel's limitation to conditions of our thought is not supposed to leave a realm of unknowable things-in-themselves. Yet he sometimes does suggest a weakly constitutive view, as when he writes of the Logic, "Hegel is introducing his version of 'subjective conditions' for objects, the fundamental, purely determined conceptual structure indispensable in the differentiation, the qualitative identification, necessary for there to be determinate objects of cognition."[15] Even with this claim, however, Pippin's Hegel subscribes to a moderate (*MCCD*) rather than a weak (*WCCD*) concept dependence.

A brief look at Frederick Beiser's strong metaphysical reading will show the tensions within readings that stresses Hegel's affinities with Spinoza. Citing Spinoza's doctrine that the two attributes of thought and extension must have a single source in substance, Beiser writes "That Hegel wanted

[15] *Ibid*., p. 205.

to give his principle of subject-object identity this Spinozist meaning there cannot be any doubt."[16] This appears to be a straightforward attribution to Hegel of *SD*. Defending the mind-independence of Hegel's absolute or substance, and presumably distancing himself from a divine mind or cosmic spirit view of *Geist*, Beiser writes that "The purpose that governs the world is only its inherent form or structure, and it does not necessarily imply the intention of some agent."[17] Beiser clearly endorses *ACD*, writing of what he calls metaphysics "on a grand scale," that "Through pure thinking alone Hegel attempts to give us knowledge of reality in itself, the absolute or the universe as a whole."[18] Our only *access* is through thinking, or concepts, but presumably this departs from Hartmann's view of the non-metaphysical and Pippin's Kantian reading in that substance is prior to and the source of the conceptual order. Yet when Beiser writes about the Logic, his metaphysical view does look like a version of *CCD*. He writes that "in the *Science of Logic* the dialectic is a metaphysics whose main task is to determine the general structure of being … it has a content all of its own, even if a very general one, namely, the most general categories of being."[19] Does this not support a "category theory" reading of Hegel's Logic and thus of his metaphysics as a whole? It could be that in this passage Beiser means "determine" as an epistemic category, and so his claim is once again about access, but that seems unlikely. Rather, it seems that Beiser's Hegel takes *ACD* and *SD* to go together with *SCCD*. It could be that Beiser thinks that Hegel's version of *SD* has priority over *SCCD*, so that the origination of being and concepts in substance (i.e., the *primacy of substance*) is not compromised by the claim that it is our concepts that constitute being. In what follows I will try to show that Hegel, on the contrary, thinks that the claim for an original substance is overcome by the moderately constitutive function of concepts, through thought itself.

THOUGHT'S DISTINCTION FROM SUBSTANCE

In the *Science of Logic* Hegel situates Spinoza's substance as the first stage in "Actuality," the third part of the "Logic of Essence." The main issue that Hegel presses in that text is how to conceive of the relation in Spinoza between substance and the attribute of thought. The following long passage contains many of Hegel's criticisms of Spinoza's view:

[16] F. Beiser, *Hegel* (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 64.
[17] *Ibid*., p. 68. [18] *Ibid*., p. 155. [19] *Ibid*., pp. 161–162.

True, substance is the absolute unity of *thought* and being or extension; therefore it contains thought itself, but only in its *unity* with extension, that is, not as *separating* itself from extension, hence in general not as a determinative and formative activity, not as a movement which returns into and begins from itself. Two consequences follow from this: one is that substance lacks the principle of *personality* – a defect which has been the main cause of hostility to Spinoza's system; the other is that cognition is external reflection which does not comprehend and derive from substance that which appears as finite, the determinateness of the attribute and the mode, and generally itself as well, but is active as an external understanding, taking up the determinations as *given* and *tracing them back* to the absolute but not taking its *beginnings* from the latter. (W 6:195–196; SL, pp. 536–537)

Hegel is clearly concerned in the opening of this passage with Spinoza's lack of appreciation for the self-determining character of thought apart from its union with extension in substance. Hegel claims that Spinoza's cognition is implicated in the shortcomings of what he calls "external reflection." Spinoza's philosophical cognition *presupposes* the finite determinations, takes them as given and links them to substance simply by pointing out their finitude and negating them. This knowing is external because the connection between the determinations and substance is unexplicated ("does not comprehend and derive"). The cognition (*Erkennen*) at issue here is philosophical knowing. Hegel points out that it has a problem not only with finite determinations, but also with its very own status as knowing – "and generally itself as well." Hegel holds that only if substance is thought itself can the cognition of substance account for itself.

It is important to bear in mind that for Hegel reflection is itself a logical or metaphysical category, not just an epistemic one. In calling Spinoza's cognition a form of external reflection, Hegel is attributing to him a version of *CCD*. In fact, the three main versions of reflection for Hegel – positing, external, and determining – correspond to the three different versions of *CCD*. In this section I make the case that the *determining* reflection model that Hegel endorses supports *MCCD*. The positing reflection model matches up roughly with *SCCD*, for it is the claim to constitute the world simply through the positing activity itself, completely eliminating anything outside reflective activity. Hegel views *positing* reflection as primarily a mode of dogmatic metaphysics.[20]

[20] See B. Longuenesse, *Hegel's Critique of Metaphysics*, trans. N. Simek (Cambridge University Press, 2007), pp. 51–53. Longuenesse provides an excellent discussion of the stages of reflection and the central moves within the "Doctrine of Essence."

A closer look at Hegel's discussion of *external* reflection shows that it corresponds to *WCCD*. I have associated weakly constitutive concept dependence with the Kantian view of the dependence of objects on the categories, but Hegel also aligns it with Spinoza in that Spinoza's attribute of thought is an external reflection on the determinate modes. In the description of external reflection in the beginning of the "Doctrine of Essence," Hegel focuses his discussion on the relation of essence and immediacy, which in the critique of Spinoza corresponds to the relation of substance and mode. Hegel writes, "Its relationship to its presupposition is such that the latter is the negative of reflection, but so that this negative *as* negative is sublated" (W 6:28–29; SL, p. 403). The immediate (or mode) only has being through being-the-negation-of-essence, but as *external* this status (the contrast-by-negation with essence) is itself negated and the immediate is simply taken as externally given. So while Spinoza's modes are within substance, their determinacy according to Hegel does not derive from substance but rather is assumed already to be there.

Hegel most clearly presents the crucial transition to determining reflection through a discussion of reflective judgment in Kant. In Hegel's view, Kant essentially overcame himself in his doctrine of reflective judgment (and in related doctrines) in the third *Critique*, though Kant did not recognize his achievement as such. According to Hegel's presentation within the "Logic of Essence," reflective judgment starts from an immediate manifold and reflectively looks for a concept to unite that manifold, a process that seems external in that the material for the concept is taken as given. But in that the concept for the manifold is identified, or the judgment is successful, the original determinacy of that manifold disappears and becomes identical with the concept. Hegel writes,

> for the universal, the principle or rule and law to which it advances in its determining, counts as the essence of that immediate which forms the starting point; and this immediate therefore counts as a nullity, and it is only the return from it, its determining by reflection, that is the positing of the immediate in accordance with its true being. Therefore, what reflection does to the immediate, and the determinations which issue from reflection, are not anything external to the immediate but are its own proper being. (W 6:31; SL, p. 405)

This is an important statement of Hegel's own *CCD* thesis. To say that reflection or conceptual activity is the "own proper being" of the immediate is to say that the concepts constitute being. To contrast this constitutive activity with sheer positing and with external assumption is to situate the activity between the strong and weak versions of *CCD*, and thus to endorse *MCCD*. Hegel writes of the determinations that result from this

reflection, "In so far, therefore, as it is the positedness that is at the same time reflection-into-self, the determinateness of reflection is *the relation to its otherness within itself*" (W 6:35; SL, p. 408). The key point of this reflection for understanding the criticism of Spinoza is that for Hegel the finite modes are determined through thought, but only in that thought can incorporate finitude as its own other. Since thought, as an attribute, must also be considered part of substance, the challenge is to think through substance's relation to a form of thought that can constitute the finite modes.

Hegel's attack on Spinoza can be read as the claim that *SD* is only compatible with a very weak and untenable version of *WCCD*, for *SD* must relegate thought, conceptual activity, to a subordinate position vis-à-vis substance. If the really real is only substance itself, even the attributes will appear as two reflective *perspectives* on that single substance. Hegel thus writes that the "absolute essence" in Spinoza is treated in a way typical of modern philosophy: "The distinguishing falls outside the absolute essence, also in modern times. 'The absolute,' one says, 'seen from this side'; – the sides thus fall outside of it. It is further [characteristic of] the standpoint of reflection to view only sides, nothing in itself" (W 20:185). Spinoza of course aimed to overcome the standpoint of subjective reflection, but he does not justify there being only two *known* attributes of substance, and he holds that there are infinitely many attributes, so our knowing of the modes is only weakly constitutive, a function of our subjective limitations.

In light of Hegel's charge that modern metaphysicians, including Spinoza, have gone astray in looking at the absolute from various perspectives, one might think that Hegel wants to go *more* metaphysical. In a certain sense this is true, but it is not true in the sense that Hegel thinks that we should identify the "in-itself determinate" *beyond* the conditions of *human* thought in an original substance. The trouble with this proposal is that the demand to go beyond perspectives can only be met through thought itself. But the lesson from the discussion of positing reflection is not to imagine that thought (reflection, concepts) can do all the work alone, without any "otherness." The answer is not *SCCD*, a return to dogmatic metaphysics, but rather *MCCD*. The negation of otherness must simultaneously be an incorporation of otherness in its determinacy. Hegel holds that only *thought*, and not substance qua substance, can accomplish this feat.

Hegel thus criticizes Spinoza for not recognizing the concept of infinity that Spinoza himself describes within the attribute of thought as

essentially constitutive. Hegel writes that "he has not recognized this Concept as the absolute Concept, and therefore has not expressed it as a moment of essence; for him the Concept falls outside of essence, into the thought of essence" (W 20:187; LHP, Vol. III, p. 263). The most natural reading of this claim is that we must simply do away with the gap separating thought (or the concept) from essence (or substance). All developments of determinacy, and the grounding of that determinacy, take place in thought itself, so why invoke something beyond thought when it does no work?

SPINOZA'S "CAUSE OF ITSELF" AND HEGEL'S CONCEPT

In the introduction to the "Logic of the Concept" Hegel insists that his critique of Spinoza in the "Logic of Essence" is an immanent critique. The exposition of the relations internal to substance resulted in a dynamic *Wechselwirkung*, or "reciprocal effect," with a structure identical to that of the Concept. Hegel writes, "The exposition of substance (contained in the last book) which leads on to the Concept is, therefore, the sole and genuine refutation of Spinozism. It is the *unveiling* of substance, and this is the *genesis of the Concept*" (W 6:250–251; SL, p. 581). The immanent critique has "unveiled" substance by showing that it consists of moves that thought itself has made. The critique is immanent because it "penetrate[s] the opponent's stronghold and meet[s] him on his own ground [*in den Umkreis seiner Stärke stellen*]" (W 6:251; SL, p. 581). Within Spinoza's "stronghold" the idea that leads to the self-overcoming of substance is the idea of the *causa sui*, the "cause-of-itself." Hegel claims that Spinoza did not take this idea seriously enough, did not draw out all of its consequences. Hegel writes, "the cause of itself produces only itself; this is a fundamental concept in all that is speculative. It is the infinite cause, in which the cause is identical with the effect. If Spinoza had further developed what lies in the *causa sui*, his substance would not have been fixed and unworkable [*das Starre*]" (W 20:168; LHP, pp. 258–259).

Hegel's version of conceptual dependence includes the idea of "cause of itself," though it is the conceptual activity of thought rather than substance that is the cause. In his treatment of Spinoza in the *Lectures on the History of Philosophy*, Hegel cites Spinoza's claim that God as "the absolutely infinite … contains no negation" (W 20:170; LHP, p. 261). The attributes for Spinoza are not negations within substance (since substance contains no negation) and it is that very fact that Hegel finds

problematic.[21] Against Spinoza's conception of absolute infinity, Hegel claims that the intellectual infinity of thought is the true model of infinity. He aligns intellectual infinity and cause-of-itself with his own idea of the "negation of the negation" (W 20:172; LHP, p. 262), a structure of conceptual activity that overcomes the externality of Spinoza's thought.

Hegel's effort to retain the cause-of-itself thesis as a claim about thought looks as though it forces us into the inverted Spinozist, divine mind theory of thought's self-production in the Logic. But we will feel this pressure only if we overlook the fact that the Logic is an account of the self-creation of conceptual determination, not of the universe as a whole or of substance as an all-inclusive super-entity. The conceptual *content* is the key to the Logic,[22] and the method of double negation works by "causing" determinations to generate their opposite and to overcome that opposition in new concepts. This is not to endorse a "conceptual scheme" reading of Hegel, for that would imply that there is a neutral content outside the scheme that could be otherwise constituted, and Hegel is not interested in that *weakly* constitutive thought. The Logic is oriented by an idea of conceptual *form*, but Hegel is very clear that this form is not to be opposed to *content*. So in the introduction to the Subjective Logic, he writes,

> This absolute form has in it a content or reality of its own; the concept, since it is not a trivial, empty identity, obtains its differentiated determinations in the moment of negativity or of absolute determining; and the content is only these determinations of the absolute form and nothing else – a content posited by the form itself and therefore adequate to it. (W 6:265; SL, p. 523)

In Hegel's view, every claim in metaphysics can be read as a claim with a certain conceptual content, including (as we have seen) Spinoza's claims about the cognition of substance and the modes. In fact, in the Subjective Logic Hegel *reconstitutes* many traditional metaphysical issues as issues of conceptual content.

[21] I would like to thank John Brandau for a useful discussion of Spinoza's views on negation.

[22] The view closest to this in the literature is that of Robert Brandom, who calls Hegel's theory fundamentally a *semantics* because of the central place of conceptual content. See especially R. Brandom, *Tales of the Mighty Dead* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); and *Reason in Philosophy: Animating Ideas* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2009). While Brandom's view certainly is closer to the non-metaphysical than metaphysical reading, I think that the focus on content is compatible with some versions of metaphysics. Brandom moves too quickly to the deontological level, but his view does leave room for a reconstructed metaphysics. In any case, the focus on content certainly need not make Hegel into a logical positivist or a pragmatist.

A very brief look at Hegel's discussion of the ontological proof for the existence of God will help us see how the content issue takes precedence. The discussion comes in the transition in the "Doctrine of the Concept" from the disjunctive inference (the final stage of "Subjectivity") to "Mechanism" (the first stage of "Objectivity"). In claiming that this unusual transition really is the same as that from the concept of God to God's existence, Hegel's first point is that for philosophical thinking "God" begins as just a name, a subject-term that "only obtains determinateness and content in its predicate … with its determinateness" (W 6:403; SL, p. 706). Taking on more directly the issue of being that worries some metaphysical readers, Hegel characteristically writes, "*Being* merely as such, or even *determinate being*, is such a meager and restricted determination, that the difficulty of finding it in the Concept may well be the result of not having considered what being or determinate being itself is" (W 6:404; SL, p. 706). The goal for Hegel is not being, but rather *richness of determination*. He thus writes, "Yet objectivity is just that much richer and higher than the *being or existence* of the ontological proof, as the pure Concept is richer and higher than that metaphysical void of the *sum total of all reality*" (W 6:405; SL, p. 707). The inference to the existence of the Cartesian God might seem a much weightier issue than the inference to mechanical forms of explanation, but for Hegel existence is a concept with its own content, and is ranked by its conceptual richness well below mechanism (not to mention teleology).

I close this section by noting that there is a sense in which the question of Hegel's proximity to Spinoza returns in full force even on my content-based reading. It might seem that Hegel is offering a *strongly constitutive* view (*SCCD*) that is very close to *SD* because the Concept, like substance, is all-inclusive. If the Logic exhausts conceptual content, and all attempts for an unmediated grasp of the non-conceptual are shown to be fruitless, then the Logic might still appear to be strongly constitutive. The objection is that since the-world's-what gets all its content right here, the concepts are necessary and sufficient.

The short answer to this objection is that the Logic does not on its own determine the world, but does so only in conjunction with nature and spirit. In the above passage, he says that the Logic is formal *in contrast to* the sciences of nature and spirit. One instructive way in which Hegel differs from Kant is that Hegel's accounts of space and time come in the philosophy of nature, *after* the theory of conceptual content has been laid out in the Logic. Whereas for Kant the "Transcendental Aesthetic" account of space and time in the first *Critique* conditions the theory of

the categories, thus making the categories only *weakly* constitutive, for Hegel's *moderately* constitutive view the concepts have an internal logic that gives them a standing apart from the specific perceptual and psychological limitations of the human subject. The result of Hegel's innovation is a theory of conceptual content that gives *primacy* to the conceptual element as constitutive of the world (the strong element), but that is *open* to the world being jointly constituted by other conditions (the weak element).

LOGICAL FREEDOM

Hegel's view of the concept as cause-of-itself comes into better focus when we examine his criticism of Spinoza, cited above, that "substance lacks the principle of *personality* – a defect which has been the main cause of hostility to Spinoza's system." To understand Hegel's claims about personality and the issue of *freedom* we need to look not to Kant, but to Fichte and his theory of freedom. Hegel actually contrasts his immanent critique of Spinoza with the external critique in Fichte's famous First Introduction to the *Wissenschaftslehre*, where Fichte opposes the freedom of his system to the fatalism of the dogmatist system. In my view Hegel's own position on logical freedom is quite close to Fichte's. He shows that without the subjective or psychological residue of Fichtean idealism, a view of conceptual determinacy inspired by Fichtean self-consciousness can overcome Spinoza's position. While the core debate is over *logical freedom*, or conceptual self-grounding, this issue is closely linked for Fichte and Hegel to *agent freedom*, the freedom of the will in human action. The view of agent freedom that emerges from Hegel's view of cause-of-itself is a *moderate* view of the self-determination of the individual that is consonant with Hegel's moderately constitutive view on concept dependence.

According to Fichte, neither the Spinozist dogmatist nor the Fichtean idealist can refute the other.[23] He writes that both sides admit the phenomenal consciousness of freedom, but they interpret that consciousness in very different ways. Whereas for the idealist this is an act of consciousness that is the "explanatory ground" of everything else, the dogmatist explains freedom as an effect of the thing-in-itself. Without a rational ground to decide between them, there is simply a choice between the two positions, a choice that Fichte thinks is settled by inclination and

[23] In the "immanent critique" passage, Hegel writes of Fichte, "Thus it has been said that for anyone who does not presuppose as an established fact the freedom and self-subsistence of the self-conscious subject there cannot be any refutation of Spinozism" (W 6:250; SL, p. 581).

interest. One chooses freedom based on a moral interest fraught with existential implications for the individual, but reason itself seems powerless to refute the dogmatist on the dogmatist's own terms.[24] Hegel found this claim insufferable, and he insisted that reason can in fact resolve this dispute. For Hegel the problem is that Fichte, like Spinoza, starts with the absolute as a first principle or definition. Hegel thinks that if he can show instead that a (roughly) Fichtean position *arises out of* Spinoza's position, the impasse would be resolved. The key move in the "Doctrine of Essence" from substantiality and causality to *Wechselwirkung* and the Concept is clearly modeled on a set of moves in Fichte's *Wissenschaftslehre*. Hegel goes from the necessary self-causation of Spinoza's substance to the free self-determination of the Fichtean I (an I that Fichte himself identified with the Concept). It takes only a quick look at Fichte's conception of *Wechselwirkung* to see that Hegel is showing that Fichte's concept properly conceived is the result of the dialectic of substance.[25]

But how could Hegel's Logic, which I have claimed is a theory of conceptual content, be so close to Fichte's consciousness-based "subjective" idealism? Hegel himself answers this question in the following important passage from the "General Division of Logic" at the opening of the *Science of Logic*, where his difference from Fichte appears to be mainly one of terminology.

> If other disciples of Kant have expressed themselves concerning the determining of the *object* by the I in this way, that the objectifying of the I is to be regarded as an original and necessary act of consciousness, so that in this original act there is not yet the idea of the I itself – which would be a consciousness of that consciousness or even an objectifying of it – then this objectifying act, in its freedom from the opposition of consciousness, is nearer to what may be taken simply for *thought* as such. But this act should no longer be called consciousness; consciousness embraces within itself the opposition of the I and its object which is not present in that original act. The name consciousness gives it a semblance of subjectivity even more than does the term *thought*, which here, however, is to be taken simply in the absolute sense as *infinite* though untainted by the finitude of consciousness, in short, *thought as such*. (W 5:60; SL, pp. 62–63)

Hegel comes close to saying that his Logic depicts the same dialectical process that Fichte had discussed under the rubric of consciousness, and that what Hegel is calling "thought as such" is the same "original and necessary act[s]" that Fichte had discussed with the I (self-relation), not-I (other-relation), and the I determining itself as determined through the

[24] FW 1:433–434; IW, pp. 18–19. [25] See FW 1:218.

not-I (determinate self-relation). Hegel's critical point is that because consciousness is a mental activity that involves embodied subjects set against a world of objects, it is inappropriate as a medium for logic. The otherness or difference should not be figured as an object set against the thinking subject, but rather as itself a conceptual determination, or pure content.

How does this view of logical freedom help us with the question of agent freedom? It can look as though Hegel holds the view of freedom espoused by Descartes (in Meditation Four), that the will is the most free when it has the least choice, namely in that it is determined or compelled by the clear and distinct knowledge of the intellect. That counts as freedom because it is knowledge that accords with the nature of the mind, and so does not leave anything to outside chance or contingency. This thesis has a practical version that accords very little weight to the will's indeterminacy or freedom of arbitrary choice. This is the practical equivalent of the strongly constitutive concept dependence (*SCCD*) view, for it holds that freedom is strongly constituted by thought, or that in free action the intellect fully determines the will. By contrast the weak version of agent freedom's practical constitution by thought would give thought a relatively minor role, for example, in setting up the options between which the will is free to choose. Hegel's rejection of such a weak view is well known, but his relation to the practical *SCCD* view is much harder to decipher. On my view Hegel's account of agent freedom follows rather closely the *moderately constitutive* view of concepts that I outlined in the previous section, and in fact highlights the attractions of *MCCD* as a reading of the Logic.

Once again, Beiser is a good representative of the view that links Spinoza and Hegel quite tightly. Beiser holds that there is an objective structure in the world or in reality, to which we must conform if we are to be free. Beiser in effect contrasts a Fichtean *WCCD* view of agent freedom with a Spinozist *SCCD* view. He writes,

> Both Fichte and Hegel see freedom in terms of self-determination; but their concepts are similar in name only. Self-determination in Hegel means that (1) I have a specific essence or nature, and that (2) it is natural and necessary for it to be realized … Hegel adopts the same solution to this problem as Spinoza: I am free in so far as I am really identical with the whole universe.[26]

Beiser claims that Fichte denies these two points in holding that humans have no nature and because the self "can choose between different courses of action."[27] It is true that Fichte consistently stresses the *indeterminacy*

[26] *Ibid*., p. 75. [27] *Ibid*.

of the free agent at the time of action, and that he insists that the self does not exist outside its acts. Yet it is not clear that Fichte is so far from Spinoza as Beiser claims, given that Fichte does have a view of true ethical content tied to a theory of human nature.[28] I think it is an open question whether Fichte really holds such a *weakly constitutive* view of thought's relation to free action.

Questions of Fichte's interpretation aside, Beiser clearly overlooks elements on Hegel's view that count against ascribing to him a Spinozist view of freedom. Hegel's view of freedom includes the very moment of indeterminacy or choice that Beiser claims separates Fichte from Spinoza and Hegel. In his outline of the rational will as having the structure of the Concept in the introduction to the *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel emphasizes this point (especially in §5). The first moment of the rational will, pure universality or absolute freedom, is just this abstraction or indeterminacy. The second moment is particularity or determinacy, the willing of finite purposes. The full concept of the rational will unites these moments as self-determination, the double negation that is personality and cause-of-itself. This model is designed to serve as the basis for an account of ethical content, of determinate duties rather than abstract principles. Yet Hegel does not think that this content is determined once and for all, as a fixed expression of human nature. Rather, Hegel's model of agent freedom is one of development and progressive incorporation of new circumstances into the agent's identity. One can know why one's actions are necessary, but this is not settled in advance through knowledge of a fixed human nature. It is rather a retrospective grasp of the necessity that has been made manifest through the exercise of freedom. Hegel takes it that the will's indeterminacy is fully compatible with an account of the content of right that has the form of necessity, and that is constituted at the highest level by "necessary relations." But this requirement clearly does not prevent agents from acting in novel ways, and indeed, from changing the character of those necessary relations themselves.

To tie together these reflections on Hegel's view of agent freedom with the issues of the logical freedom of the Concept, I want to remark briefly on the light that the agent freedom issue sheds on the puzzling ending to the Logic. The Logic concludes with "The Absolute Idea," which consists of a discussion of method. Hegel's claim is that this method is the all-powerful, for "no object … could not be penetrated by it" (W 6:551;

[28] See Allen Wood's chapter in this volume, pp. 121–135 for a discussion of the influence of Spinoza on Fichte's views.

SL, p. 826), and he identifies the method with reason's "highest and sole *drive* to find and cognize *itself by means of itself in everything*" (W 6:552; SL, p. 826). This use of "drive" can seem very strange, but reading Fichte and Hegel together it makes perfect sense as a reinterpretation of Fichte's absolute drive to self-determination. The difference is that Hegel thinks his version of immanent negativity can capture determinate content in a way that Fichte's merely reflective method could not. The trouble with the Fichtean drive was its inability to come to terms with conditions outside the strict derivation, leaving Fichte with an idealist philosophy of freedom striving *against* the actual world. Hegel's view of logical freedom expressed in the method, like the model of freedom as practical incorporation, is a *moderately constitutive* view because it allows for outside conditions, but subordinates them to thought through negation. The method does not create the-world's-what *from nothing*, but rather constitutes the necessity of the world by incorporating it within the system of rational inferences.

While Hegel's criticisms of Spinoza do draw us away from some traditional readings of Hegel as a metaphysician, in the end they highlight the element of determinacy or rational content that is shared by metaphysical and non-metaphysical readers alike. The Logic is a theory of conceptual content, where that includes the content of the concepts of "being," "existence," "actuality," and "objectivity" that are often used to indicate a metaphysical view. Hegel resists all attempts to say that these are *only our concepts*. We can and do think ontologically with them. The general requirement to make our thinking *non-dogmatic* metaphysics is the requirement not to leave opaque what determinate work our concepts are doing, and thus not to posit substrata or essences impermeable to thought. To some this reliance on content will seem an attempt to smooth over an important distinction between a Kantian view of subjective conditions and a direct revelation of the-world's-what through thought. Hegel endorses neither of these extremes, but rather a middle position on concept dependence that I have called moderately constitutive. It is characteristically Hegelian not to accept one-sided positions, and I for one do not see why his position on this distinction should be any different.

CHAPTER 12

Two models of metaphysical inferentialism: Spinoza and Hegel

Gunnar Hindrichs

INTRODUCTION

In the following study, I interpret Spinoza's philosophy as a model of metaphysical inferentialism. By 'metaphysical inferentialism,' I understand the combination of inferential patterns and revisionary metaphysics: a therapy for conceptual vexations that draws on the inferential texture of thinking and yields a speculative insight into the great chain of being. Spinoza's philosophy differs herein from the inferentialism of our days, which is primarily pragmatic in character.[1] But his model of metaphysical inferentialism rests on fixed definitions of basic concepts and amounts to an intuitive knowledge of the whole. Another metaphysical inferentialist, Hegel, dismisses these moments as violating the inferential structure of thought. For him, the only kind of fixation that can be justified under the premises of inferentialist thinking is the closed system of thought itself. However, the closure of the system does not occur until the end of reasoning. Thus, Hegel transforms Spinoza's *prima philosophia* into a *philosophia ultima*.

THERAPY

Spinoza's philosophy is overtly therapeutic in nature.[2] It aims at the dissolution of conceptual perplexities and at a change of thinking in order to gain insight into the good. Aspiring to this aim, Spinoza provides

I am indebted to Nicholas Theis for polishing my English.

[1] Most notably the work of Robert Brandom. On Brandom's own reading of Spinoza, see his *Tales of the Mighty Dead* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002), pp. 121–142.

[2] M. Hampe, "Rationality as the Therapy of Self-Liberation in Spinoza's *Ethics*," in C. Carlisle and J. Ganeri (eds.), *Philosophy as Therapeia* (Cambridge University Press, 2010), pp. 35–49 gives a good general overview from this perspective.

a *medicina mentis*, as the title of a book by his interlocutor Ehrenfried Walther von Tschirnhaus reads.[3] Philosophy is therapy.

The title of Spinoza's early *Treatise on the Emendation of the Intellect* openly displays the therapeutic character of his philosophy: the intellect has to be emendated. The need for its emendation implies that it is in bad shape. Philosophy is the agent of this emendation. To put it in medical terms: the pathologies of the intellect have to be cured. How is this therapy for thinking supposed to proceed? It has to reorganize the conceptual capacities toward their best operation. Just as physical therapy aims at restoring the proper function of the body, intellectual therapy seeks to restore the proper function of thinking. This task implies that one has to begin with a preliminary account of the functions of thinking in general in order to see what its proper function might be. In the *Treatise*, Spinoza divides the functions of thinking into four classes (TIE §19): first, thinking that rests on report or conventional signs; second, thinking that rests on random experience; third, thinking that rests on inadequate inference; and fourth, thinking that rests on adequate inference or that perceives the essence of a thing alone. It is evident that only one of these four functions can serve as the end toward which philosophy should emendate the intellect. Whereas thinking that rests on report, on random experience, or on inadequate inference is doomed to uncertainty by the uncertain information provided through its source, thinking that rests on adequate inference or that perceives the essence of a thing alone gains insight into the nature of the thing in question. And since all thinking seeks, in principle, to cognize things, the first three functions of thinking are malfunctions, while the fourth is its function proper. Hence, if one wants to cure the intellect of its malfunctions, one has to reflect upon the question about how to reorganize the conceptual capacities in such a way that they are able to infer adequately or to perceive directly the essence of a thing.

This is a therapy of thinking. Yet it is not only a therapy of thinking but also a therapy of the thinker. Spinoza begins his investigation with a confession of his uneasiness in culture. The conventions concerning good and evil have proven to be unwarranted, rendering ordinary life empty and futile, and the rationality of the given form of life becomes doubtful. Spinoza thus proclaims: "I resolved at last to find out whether there was anything which would be the true good" (TIE §1).[4] This ethical goal is

[3] E. W. von Tschirnhaus, *Medicina mentis sive Tentamen genuinae logicae, in qua differitur de methodo detegendi incognitas veritates* (Amsterdam: Rieuwerts, 1687).

[4] I use Curley's translation.

the point of reference to which the envisaged emendation of the intellect is attached. In the midst of uncertainty about good and bad, we seek for certainty about the true good that helps one to establish a new form of life (*institutum novum*) that is sounder than the old. What this purpose requires is a "remedy" (TIE §7) for the intellectual uncertainty in which we live, a remedy that eases the uneasiness in culture by providing knowledge of the good life. The therapy of thinking yields a therapy of the thinker's life; it aspires to the reorganization of conceptual capacities toward their ability to infer adequately or to perceive directly the essence of a thing as a continuous struggle.

In order to accomplish this goal, Spinoza analyzes the concept of essence itself.[5] It is the very notion of essence, not a preceding epistemological theory, that provides him with the account of thinking's proper function. The crux of this notion consists in the following equation: the objective essence of a thing is the true idea of the thing (TIE §34). Let us spell out the equation. The term 'objective essence' refers to what a thing is. What a thing is, in turn, is given by its definition. The true idea of a thing is hence the definition of the thing. Note that the true idea does not *represent* the definition of a thing; it simply *is* the definition. In other words, the objective essence is not represented by conceptual content, it is the conceptual content itself. Accordingly, it is sufficient to state that we cognize a thing truly when we conceive what it is, whereas it is gratuitous to introduce the further relation between the representation of an essence and the essence represented. We are thus left with the binary relation of conceptual content, or objective essence, and the thing. However, the objective essence of the thing is not the thing. The definition of a table is not a table. The objective essence, or idea, of the thing can thus be taken independently from its object and conceived by itself through another idea. The technical term that denotes the essence insofar as it is taken by itself is 'formal essence,' a terminology in accordance with the scholastic distinction between 'objective concept' (*conceptus objectivus*) and 'formal concept' (*conceptus formalis*), which is also visible in Descartes.[6] To summarize these characteristics, the objective essence of a thing is its true idea, which can, in turn, become the object of another idea, and so on.

Spinoza concludes from his analysis of 'essence,' first, that it is not necessary to have an idea of the idea of a thing in order to conceive what

[5] A helpful overview on the concept of essence in the different texts of Spinoza can still be found in A. Rivaud, *Les notions d'essence et d'existence dans la philosophie de Spinoza* (Paris: Alcan, 1906).

[6] N. Wells, "Objective Reality of Ideas in Descartes, Caterus, and Suárez," *Journal of the History of Philosophy* 28 (1990), 33–61.

the thing is, and, second, that it is necessary to have the idea of a thing in order to form the idea of this idea. His first conclusion is the result of the identity of true idea and objective essence. The conceptual content, which I must have in order to know what a thing is, is the definition of the thing. And the definition of the thing is identical to the true idea of the thing. The true idea of the thing is thus the entire conceptual content I need. In other words, we are not required to know that we know, or to develop ideas of ideas, if we want to know what a thing is. We are just required to know, or to develop true ideas about, a thing. The second conclusion is the result of the distinction between objective and formal essence. If the formal essence is the objective essence taken by itself, there is no formal essence without objective essence. Therefore, I have to know, or to develop an idea about, something before I can know that I know, or develop an idea of the idea about, something. These are the two conclusions that result from Spinoza's analysis of the notion of essence: we do not have to know that we know if we know something, and we cannot know that we know unless we know something.

All this provides the ground for Spinoza's central claim. It reads: "From this it is clear that certainty is nothing but the objective essence itself" (TIE §35). What does this claim mean? Certainty is assured knowledge of what a thing is. We learned that the knowledge of what a thing is equals the conceptual content that is the thing's objective essence. Certainty is thus the assured objective essence of a thing. But how do we get the assurance of the objective essence? Obviously, some idea of the idea is needed, if we want to ensure that the essence is truly the objective essence of a thing.[7] And nonetheless Spinoza claims that certainty is nothing but the objective essence itself. In order to solve this riddle, we have to take into account that, according to Spinoza's argument, we cannot know that we know unless we know something. Hence, the needed assurance has to be derived from some primordial knowledge of a thing. In other words, it has to be derived from a primordial objective essence. This primordial objective essence is the "norm" (TIE §38) according to which thought can reflect itself. The conceptual content that consists in the primordial objective essence implies normatively the terms in which thinking can have true ideas. And if a primordial objective essence is the norm according to which thought can derive all its true content, this primordial

[7] A. Matheron, "Idée, idée de l'idée et certitude dans le *Tractatus de intellectus emendatione*," in Groupe de Recherche Spinoziste (eds.), *Travaux et documents 2: Méthode et métaphysique* (Paris: Presses de l'Université de Paris Sorbonne, 1989), pp. 93–104.

objective essence has to be taken as a formal essence, so that thought can reflect upon its implications and obey its normative constraints. In other words, articulating the implications of a primordial definition through higher-order thought enables us to infer all other definitions of things in a sound way. Thus, Spinoza's claim that certainty is nothing but the objective essence itself is justified under the given conditions. Certainty is indeed nothing but the primordial objective essence from which all conceptual content has to be inferred, and conceptual content is assured knowledge if and only if it is implied in the primordial objective essence.

The proper function of thinking consists, therefore, in the articulation of the primordial objective essence. Unfolding this essence weaves the web of thought. From this essence, all content has to be derived, and in this essence, all content is implied. It is the point of reference at which the therapy of thinking is attached.

METAPHYSICS

The history of philosophy in the twentieth century teaches that conceptual therapy has a tendency toward the destruction of metaphysics. The cure of conceptual vexations seems to amount to a mere dissolution of perplexities rather than to constructive solutions. Metaphysics, in contrast, is perhaps the boldest of all constructive attempts. It thus appears to fade away with the dissolutions of perplexities.

However, Spinoza's conceptual therapy has the opposite result. Its attempt to restore the proper function of thinking leads to the notion of a primordial objective essence. And in order to substantiate this notion, one has to embrace a solid piece of metaphysics. The reason is the following. If a primordial objective essence is the norm according to which thought can derive all its true content, this primordial objective essence has to imply all conceptual content. But there is only one objective essence that entails such far-reaching implications. It is the essence of the most perfect being (*ens perfectissimum*). In older nomenclature, the term 'perfection' denotes a conceptual determination of a being. Correspondingly, the most perfect being is the being that features the highest conceptual determination. The highest conceptual determination, in turn, encapsulates the most comprehensive implications. To conceive the objective essence of the most perfect being thus amounts to conceiving the objective essence that possesses the highest degree of conceptual implications. And the highest degree of conceptual implications is what we need if we want to infer all our conceptual content from a primordial objective essence.

Spinoza concludes: "The most perfect method will be the one that shows how the mind is to be directed according to the norm of the given idea of the most perfect being" (TIE §39). Yet the idea of the most perfect being is a masterpiece of metaphysics. Thus the therapy of thinking ends in metaphysical construction.

From here, a new question arises. The procedure of the therapy of thinking has transpired, now, as the reflection upon the objective essence of the most perfect being. But the objective essence of the most perfect being is a metaphysical construction. How, then, is the metaphysical construction to proceed? Spinoza hints at two means by which it can proceed (TIE §91ff). The first is by definitions, and the second is by sound inferences. Both enable us to conceive the objective essence of things. For the definition is nothing else than the objective essence, and the inferences are the ways by which we can advance to new definitions. Spinoza furthermore presents rules for how to make definitions and inferences. In our context, the most important of these rules says that we have to begin with definitions of particulars, not of general kinds. Definitions of general kinds could imply ambiguities that are difficult to see for perplexed thought. Thus, to abide by definitions of particulars is to exclude the confusions that are lurking at the bottom of general definitions. These definitions of particulars are the premises from which we infer more and more conclusions. The coherent web of conclusions that originates in the course of inferences, then, is the metaphysical construction of the most perfect being and its implications.

These methodological requirements precipitate the form of Spinoza's main work, the *Ethics*. Proceeding *more geometrico* in – allegedly – sound inferences from definitions, axioms, and postulates, it constructs the objective essence of the most perfect being and its implications. Note that the tacit claim is that this construction is just the unfolding of what it constructs; for the objective essence that is to be constructed serves, as we saw, as the norm of construction. The metaphysical construction simply articulates the implications of the idea of the most perfect being. In other words, it articulates God. This is the reason for the fact that the *Ethics* begins with a book on God. And since the articulation of implications is essential to the metaphysical construction, there is no doctrine "behind the geometrical method."[8] The geometrical method, or sound-inferential articulation, is nothing other than reflection upon God. The definitions

[8] What kind of doctrine is lurking there is contested by those who aim to look behind the geometrical method. To take just the two most impressive works: H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of Spinoza: Unfolding the Latent Processes of His Reasoning*, 2 vols., Vol. 1 (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

and axioms at the beginning of the *Ethics*, as well as the geometrical method by which it advances, are thus condensations of methodological considerations.[9] They substantiate the needs of conceptual therapy.

However, the definitions in the beginning of the *Ethics* are by no means solely definitions of particulars, as the earlier *Treatise* demands. In fact, there is only one single definition that defines a particular: the one that defines God. The other definitions speak of categories, and the axioms speak of relations. Hence, the beginning of the process is much more complicated than it seemed initially. In addition to the definition of the particular named 'God,' a categorial frame is established in which the definition of God can be articulated. This framework is indispensable. The definition of God reads: "By God I understand … a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes" (E1d6). This is a workable definition of the most perfect being. The term 'attribute' is another expression for 'perfection'; both denote the conceptual determination of something. To be sure, Spinoza's definition deviates from the traditional concept of the most perfect being in understanding attributes not as necessary properties, but as essences that constitute God, whereas the tradition of scholasticism took perfections to be properties.[10] Nonetheless, from a formal point of view, his definition of God certainly fulfills the need for a definition of the primordial objective essence, namely, the most perfect being. Formally, perfections are, as said, conceptual determinations of a being. And formally, attributes are, as essences, likewise conceptual determinations of a being: those determinations that constitute what a being is. To be more precise, they are conceptual determinations that constitute a being by "expressing" its essence (E1p19d).[11] They are the being's essence in the sense that they have no other content than the essence that they express; and they are expressions in the sense that they present the same content from different perspectives. Correspondingly, consisting of an infinity of attributes, God's essence is expressed through infinite

University Press, 1934) argues that, despite its arithmetical outlook, Spinoza's thought actually turns along the paths of medieval reasoning. On the other hand, E. M. Curley, *Behind the Geometrical Method: A reading of Spinoza's* Ethics (Princeton University Press, 1988) claims that a critical dialogue with Descartes and Hobbes forms the core of Spinoza's argument. Both coincide in their belief that the geometrical method is but the exoteric veil over an esoteric argument that develops independently from the inferential framework of propositions and demonstrations.

[9] M. Walther, *Metaphysik als Anti-Theologie: Die Philosophie Spinozas im Zusammenhang der religionsphilosophischen Problematik* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1971), pp. 1–29. See also F. Barbaras, *Spinoza: La science mathématique du salut* (Paris: CNRS, 2007), pp. 27–70.

[10] M. Guéroult, *Spinoza i: Dieu (Ethique, i)* (Paris: Aubier-Montaigne, 1968), pp. 73–74.

[11] G. T. Richter, *Spinozas philosophische Terminologie: Historisch und immanent kritisch untersucht* (Leipzig: Barth, 1913), pp. 23–50 elucidates the terminological contexts of 'attribute.'

attributes. They present the same content in different conceptual determinations. And this means that God has infinite conceptual determinations – in other words, that God is the most perfect being. Spinoza's definition of God thus provides us with the primordial essence that the methodological requirements demand. But in order to understand it, one has to know what an attribute is, what a substance is, what infinity is, and what their contraries are. The other definitions provide this knowledge. In addition, they provide the concepts necessary to articulate the implications of 'a substance consisting of an infinity of attributes,' namely, that it is its own cause, that it is free, and that it is eternal. Accordingly, the objective essence of the most perfect being could not be articulated if the methodological requirement of definitions of particulars were not broadened to the extent that definitions of the necessary categories are also allowed. The most perfect being is defined in the framework of all seven definitions.

From here, the metaphysical construction can begin. Unfolding the objective essence of God as given in his definition and the surrounding categorial frame, the implications of this essence are articulated through inferences from the given premises. And since in the course of these inferences God is proved to exist necessarily (E1p11d), and since he is also proved to entail everything (E1p15d), it is certain that the things that are conceived through the articulation of that essence do exist, and that the range of existing things is exhausted by it. The metaphysical construction is not spinning in a void.[12]

Yet Spinoza's most perfect being has taken on a peculiar form. Because it implies all conceptual content, it is nothing other than the totality of inferences itself. God is the inferential web. The web of conceptual inferences, however, is not merely a web of concepts detached from the realm of entities. It implies ontological commitments. These commitments are grounded in the ontological proof of God that is given in E1p15. If God exists necessarily, the entirety of inferences exists necessarily. In other words, the objective essences, which are implied in the objective essence of God, exist. Now, since objective essence and formal essence are two distinct matters, the existence of an objective essence is not the same as the existence of an essence taken by itself. It is not the definition taken

[12] To qualify the *Ethics* as a "hypothetico-deductive system," which starts with general hypotheses, deduces consequences from them, and checks those against the data, as J. Bennett, *A Study of Spinoza's Ethics* (Indianapolis: Hackett, 1984), pp. 20–28, proposes, seems to miss the point. Owing to the ontological argument, there is no gap between thought and "data," and the system does not have to be confirmed by something other than itself. It is indeed its own norm.

as definition that exists. It is rather the content of the definition that exists. According to the ontological proof in the *Ethics*, God's objective essence exists, and with it all objective essences that it implies. Thus, all things whose essences are implied in God's essence do exist. This is the ontological commitment to which the necessary existence of God constrains us: the web of conceptual inferences is the web of existing entities conceived by these concepts. In Spinoza's formulation: "The order and connection of ideas is the same as the order and connection of things" (E2p7).

The inferential order and its ontological commitments finally culminate in a unique mode of knowledge. At its outset, the metaphysical construction of the most perfect being and its inferences rests on definitions and axioms. Since the proper function of thought consists in drawing inferences from principles that are, in turn, inferred from methodological considerations of conceptual therapy, the proper function of thought is discursive. It proceeds step by step, premise by premise, conclusion by conclusion. In the course of these inferences, however, the inferential construction gives birth to another function of thought that is even more proper than the discursive function. Spinoza famously distinguishes three kinds of knowledge: imagination, reason, and intuitive science (E2p40s2). The three kinds of knowledge denote three different functions of thought. The first two are identical to the four functions that the *Treatise* had established. Imagination rests on report, on random experience, and on inadequate inference. Reason, in contrast, rests on adequate inference or perceives the essence of a thing alone, as given in the definitions of the *Ethics* and its geometrical demonstrations. Yet the third kind of knowledge, intuitive science, is new. It denotes an insight that does not use inferential rules in order to derive knowledge from given premises, but that simply grasps the inferential web in which an essence gets its meaning at one glance. It is knowledge of particulars that implicitly knows the totality of inferences on which the definitions of the particulars depend. Such intuitive knowledge is the most proper function of thought, since it does not have to run through the chains of premises and conclusions in order to know what a thing is and simply grasps the chains at once (E5p24ff.). It sees God in every particular. Thinking comes to rest in such intuitive knowledge.

Spinoza's metaphysical inferentialism thus includes a variety of conceptual capacities. The proper function of thought is inferentialist, because it consists in drawing conclusions from premises, which in turn are inferred from requirements of a therapy for thinking. And it is metaphysical,

because it has to start with the definition of the most perfect being, which in turn involves far-reaching ontological commitments. The malfunctions of thinking are thereby transformed into the pathways of sound reasoning. In the end, all this amounts to an intuition that can grasp the entire web of inferences in one particular being. Here the therapy for thinking finds its fulfillment, and wisdom is achieved.

INFERENTIALISM

Spinoza's therapy for thinking gave birth to the metaphysical construction of the most perfect being. However, the proposed model of metaphysical inferentialism contains severe problems. This is where Hegel's philosophical enterprise comes in. His famous criticisms of Spinoza's philosophy make some of its problems manifest. These criticisms do not reject Spinoza's inferentialist point of view, nor do they reject his transition from conceptual therapy to metaphysics. Rather they bring to light that Spinoza cannot truly actualize his own intentions: his ideas fall short of the conditions of inferentialism.

Given the prominence of Hegel's critique of Spinozism, I restrict my analysis to three main criticisms that Hegel pleads.[13] The first criticism is directed against the Euclidean setup of definitions, axioms, and postulates, which the *Ethica ordine geometrico demonstrata* displays.[14] Hegel claims that the geometrical method is apt only for the restricted kind of knowledge that he calls 'understanding' – knowledge that assumes that concepts have fixed boundaries. Such knowledge cannot account for transformative tendencies that are inherent in the concepts. It thus rests on restrictions of conceptual content that violate its actual implications and produce vexations that originate from the presupposition that concepts have definite boundaries. For these reasons, the setup of definitions, axioms, and postulates is inadequate for all knowledge that takes open

[13] On the relation of Hegel and Spinoza, see G. H. R. Parkinson, "Hegel, Pantheism, and Spinoza," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 38 (1977), 449–459; Y. Yovel, *Spinoza and Other Heretics*, 2 vols. (Princeton University Press, 1989), Vol. II, pp. 27–50; P. Macherey, "Le Spinoza idéaliste de Hegel," and K. Düsing, "Von der Substanz zum Subjekt: Hegels spekulative Spinoza-Deutung," in M. Walther (ed.), *Spinoza und der deutsche Idealismus* (Würzburg: Königshausen & Neumann, 2001), pp. 145–161 and 163–180 respectively; J.-M. Vaysse, *Totalité et subjectivité: Spinoza dans l'idéalisme allemande* (Paris: Vrin, 1994), pp. 235–284; and B. Sandkaulen, "Die Ontologie der Substanz, der Begriff der Subjektivität und die Faktizität des Einzelnen: Hegels reflexionslogische 'Widerlegung' der Spinozanischen Metaphysik," *Internationales Jahrbuch des deutschen Idealismus* 5 (2007), 235–275.

[14] Hegel, *Glauben und Wissen*, in W 4:24; *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie III*, in W 20:167ff.

boundaries and implicit tendencies of conceptual content into account. One can call this indictment of the geometrical method the charge of positivism. According to it, the Euclidean design of Spinoza's thought petrifies knowledge as resting on distinct, fixed, and given contents. Moreover, Hegel argues that the demonstrative development of knowledge that results from the definitions, axioms, and postulates is nothing but the explication of something that is already present in these beginnings. But what is the source of these beginnings? They are simply given by the initial setup. The charge of positivism consequently leads to the further charge that the petrified content is not even justified. And lastly, since everything is deduced from the given set of fixed concepts, all particular knowledge can be reduced to this set. The manifold of content disappears in the given matrix of initial definitions.

These three aspects of positivism – petrification, mere givenness, and meagerness of thought – delegitimize the Euclidean setup of the *Ethics*. The charge affects the pursuit of inferential knowledge. If inferential knowledge is grounded in the definition of the most perfect being and the categorial frame that is needed in order to understand the definition of a most perfect being, all conceptual content is implied in that definition and its categorial frame. But in that case it is not inferred, but simply given by the set of definitions. The fact that the definition of the most perfect being was itself inferred from the requirements of conceptual therapy does not dissolve the predicament. The methodological demand to begin with the definition of the most perfect being is a premise of form, not of content. The conceptual content of the definition is simply established by definition. Furthermore, the categorial framework is taken over from late scholasticism and Cartesianism without further justification. Some axioms, in addition, seem to express empirically given contents, e.g., "Man thinks" (E2a2) or "We feel that a certain body is affected in many ways" (E2a4). Accordingly, the content of the first premises is not inferred. And because all conceptual content is just the articulation of the content of the definition and its categorial framework, all conceptual content is implied in unjustified, given content.

The charge of a positivistic initial finds its complement in Hegel's second criticism. It aims at the end of Spinoza's reasoning rather than at its beginnings. The ideal end of Spinoza's philosophy consists in the intuitive science in which the therapy for thinking culminates. But from Hegel's perspective, the very idea of an intellectual intuition does not make sense under the premises of inferentialism. To be sure, Hegel's refusal of intellectual intuition was directed mainly against Fichte, Schelling, and their

contemporaries, who argued for the necessity of replacing conceptual mediation by intuitive immediacy.[15] But it affects Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva*, too, which was the paradigm for those attempts. Hegel's words for those who credit themselves and others with an intellectual intuition are as strong as they are famous: "to pit this single insight, that in the Absolute all is the same, against the full body of articulated cognition, which at least seeks and demands such fulfillment, to palm off its Absolute as the night in which, as the saying goes, all cows are black – this is cognition naively reduced to vacuity."[16] These lines sound somewhat unjust if they are really meant to cover Spinoza's *scientia intuitiva* together with Fichte's or Schelling's systems. Neither is "in the Absolute" all the same, nor is the single insight of intellectual intuition pitted against articulated cognition. Spinoza's third kind of knowledge rather cognizes the articulated knowledge in a single movement, so that the absolute that is intuited through it displays the wealth of internal relations between manifold particularities. Nonetheless, Hegel's attack points at a problem that in fact might be lurking at the bottom of Spinoza's considerations. I propose the following reconstruction of Hegel's charge. To condense inferential knowledge into the single intuition of the whole violates the inferential rules again. Intuitions are perceptions of something that is given to empirical or intellectual sight. Inferences, in contrast, are not given but made. One has to draw them, step by step. In other words, inferential knowledge is discursive knowledge. If one proclaims to intuit the web of inferences, one thus pretends to encapsulate discursive knowledge in intuitive knowledge. And this is not possible. Discursive knowledge cannot be transformed into intuitive knowledge because inferences can never be given but have to be made. As a result, Spinoza's intuitive science transforms inferential articulation into a commixture of conceptual implications. It does not explicate conceptual developments; it conflates them. Correspondingly, Spinoza's intuitive science remains obscure. It advocates a view into the dark night of conceptual mingle-mangle in lieu of the enlightenment of concepts. This is the rationale that renders Hegel's attack against all versions of intellectual intuition effective versus Spinoza's intuitive science as well. Inferentialism has to be defended against its intuitionism.

The third criticism follows from the first two. It reformulates Spinoza's notion of God under the conditions of the two former criticisms.

[15] X. Tilliette, *Recherches sur l'intuition intellectuelle de Kant à Hegel* (Paris: Vrin, 1995), pp. 225–229.

[16] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Phenomenology of Spirit*, trans. A. V. Miller (Oxford University Press, 1977), p. 9.

Remember that Spinoza's notion of the most perfect being is nothing other than the notion of the inferential web. Now, if one cannot begin with a given definition of the most perfect being and its categorial framework, the notion of a most perfect being must itself be inferred from conceptual premises. That is, the notion of the inferential web has to be gained through inferential reasoning within the web of premises and conclusions. In other words, the chain of inferences is supposed to yield its own concept. It has to be self-referential. Thus, Spinoza's most perfect being, God, is to be transformed into a self-referential totality of conceptual content. This transformation is meant by Hegel's famous proposition that "substance" shall be conceived not only as "substance," but equally as "subject."[17] In Spinoza's terminology, God, or the totality of inferences, is the one and only substance. If it is now, as Hegel demands, not given but inferred within the chain of conceptual reasoning, i.e., within itself, then the substance – the totality of inferences – refers to itself. But to refer to oneself by forming a concept of oneself is the characteristic of subjectivity. A self-referential totality thus takes on the quality of subjectivity, and substance has to be equally conceived as subject. This is not just a change in the description of the totality of conceptual content; it applies to the idea of the world as well. Since the totality of conceptual inferences is also the totality of existing entities that are conceived by these inferences, the totality of entities acquires another shape.[18] Instead of being a fixed sum of states of affairs in the matrix of given definitions and derived propositions, the world is a process that articulates itself in the same way as the chains of inferences move forward to a better articulation of their own notion. Conceptual self-referentiality thus implies ontological self-referentiality. In this way, Hegel attempts to conceive the world as a living unity, drawing upon the ancient concept of life as self-movement (*autokinesis*). The substance as subject moves itself toward a more and more explicit articulation. The metaphysical matrix becomes dynamic.

These are the three main charges that Hegel volleys against Spinoza. They claim that the beginning and the end of Spinoza's metaphysical inferentialism violate its inferentialist premises, and that accordingly the totality of conceptual content, and with it the world, have to be recast as a self-referential whole. The three charges amount to the general accusation that metaphysical inferentialism is not yet complete. In order to complete it, we need an improved model.

[17] *Ibid*., p. 10.
[18] G. W. F. Hegel, *Vorlesungen über die Geschichte der Philosophie* III, in W 20:166f.

PHILOSOPHIA ULTIMA

The improved model of metaphysical inferentialism is, of course, Hegel's own system. Its entrance is formed by *The Phenomenology of Spirit*. The *Phenomenology* does not begin with a set of definitions, axioms, and postulates, nor does it establish methodological premises from which one can deduce the proper function of thinking. Instead, it takes given conceptual claims at face value. But it does so only to show that these claims imply tendencies that transgress the boundaries of the concepts.

This beginning assumes that the norm against which concepts can be reassessed is provided by their own claims. And it assumes, in addition, that no concept can fulfill its claims. Instead, under further investigation, the concept collides with its own norm. The norm of a concept thus longs for other concepts that dissolve the collision. But the new concepts entail new claims and, because of them, are subject to the same procedure. The conceptual change goes on and on. This ongoing conceptual change is as therapeutic as Spinoza's philosophy.[19] It is also as inferential as Spinoza's philosophy. New concepts are inferred from old ones, because the old concepts entail tendencies that lead to the new ones. But unlike Spinoza's philosophy, the inferential cure of conceptual vexations that are produced by claims that cannot be fulfilled by the concepts themselves is accomplished solely through the tendencies inherent in the conceptual claims themselves. These tendencies have to be made explicit. Once they are made explicit, one can see how the cramps of thought that rest in implicit collisions of a concept and its own norm are to be dissolved. This articulation of conceptual tendencies enables one to infer the new concepts into which the old concepts have to be transformed. The conceptual norms become norms of conceptual change. All this is done through the articulation of concepts alone. The entrance to Hegel's system is thus inferentialism without first principles.

How does such inferentialism commence? The *Phenomenology* engages with the claim of thought that seems to be the most immediate and, consequently, the most obvious one. This claim is the claim of sense certainty. Hegel argues that even this most immediate claim of thought is full of conceptual mediation, and the concatenations of conceptual changes begin.[20] They end in the bold notion of absolute knowledge.[21] It embraces all conceptual claims; for it is the knowledge of the realm

[19] J. N. Findlay, *Hegel: A Re-Examination* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1959), pp. 58–82.
[20] Hegel, *Phenomenology*, p. 58–66. [21] *Ibid*., pp. 479–493.

in which the concatenation of concepts and their claims can take place. Hegel's title for that realm is "spirit." The knowledge of it is part of it, because spirit is the context in which conceptual claims, and thus claims of knowledge, can be made. In other words, if we follow the conceptual change far enough, the conceptual realm produces a concept of the conceptual realm: spirit articulates itself. However, the conceptual realm that articulates itself as the realm in which conceptual claims can undergo an ongoing conceptual change is itself not subject to further conceptual change. It is rather the order in which conceptual changes can take place. Therefore the knowledge of spirit is "absolute," in the sense that it faces no further conditions that have to be fulfilled.

At this point, Hegel's model of inferentialism has already gone very far. It begins without principles and ends in absolute knowledge. Has it gone too far? In Hegel's eyes, it still has not gone far enough. For *The Phenomenology of Spirit* cannot provide the categorial framework that rules the great chain of concepts. To be sure, the norms of conceptual claims, and nothing else, have pushed the concepts toward their transformation into other concepts; the notion of spirit is their product. But these norms are dependent on more general norms that rule the concept-use beyond the case of particular claims. What are these general norms like? Hegel's answer reads that they are the categories of traditional metaphysics and transcendental philosophy. These categories are by no means proper functions of thought. On the contrary, they imply as many implicit tendencies as the particular claims did. The history of metaphysics from the Presocratics to Kant is full of conceptual vexations that stem from the fact that those tendencies were not adequately explicated. Nonetheless, the traditional categories do construct the conceptual realm, albeit in a distorted way. Hegel thus holds a second conceptual therapy as necessary: a therapy of categories.

This second therapy occurs in his *Science of Logic*.[22] Here, Hegel again attempts to cure the problems of traditional categories inferentially, by articulating their change into other categories. Since the general norms that rule all particular conceptual claims are, on the one hand, ontological claims about being and essence, and, on the other, transcendental claims about conceptual thinking itself, the categories "being," "essence," and "notion," together with their manifold subcategories, construct the circuit

[22] The critique of traditional metaphysics in the *Logic* is elucidated mainly in regard to the logic of essence. See especially M. Theunissen, *Schein und Sein: Die kritische Funktion der Hegelschen Logik* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1978).

of conceptual thinking. Accordingly, they have to be cured of inherent shortcomings. The three parts of *The Science of Logic* are thus devoted to the three main categories: the logic of being, the logic of essence, and the logic of the notion. They are three parts of a grand categorial change that end in what Hegel calls the "absolute idea." The absolute idea is the content of thought in which conceptual claim and reality are identical. This idea articulates the implicit norm of categories. Unlike ordinary concepts, a category does not only claim to describe reality correctly; it claims to *constitute* reality. Conceptual content and reality are supposed to coincide. This is the implicit norm of categories. However, Hegel argues that each particular category falls as short of this norm as ordinary concepts did in regard to their claims. Consequently, each particular category has to be transformed into another category that better fits its claim. The absolute idea is the result of this inferential transformation of categories. Hence, the categorial framework of the conceptual realm is constituted in the same manner as the notion of spirit itself. It is again inferentialism without principles.

The totality of inferences, whose inherent norm is articulated by the absolute idea, is thus ruled through the process of inferences itself. There are no norms imposed on it from outside. Indeed, the concepts that can express the logic of that process are developed within the process. In the famous beginning of the *Logic*, the categories of "being," "nothing," and "becoming" are the means that are supposed to accomplish the mission impossible of gaining the logic of a process through the very process itself. They articulate the series of position, negation, and transformation, which rules the categorial change.[23] Even the elementary concepts of its logic are thus produced by the inferential chain, and Hegel confidently writes: "I maintain that it is this self-construing method alone which enables philosophy to be an objective, demonstrated science."[24]

However, is such inferentialism without principles an inferentialism that produces even its own logic, not spinning in a void? Hegel's answer draws on the second of his logical concepts, the concept of negation.[25] Negations indicate that a conceptual or categorial claim is not fulfilled. A concept is negated if its claim to describe the reality proves to be unsound;

[23] T. Pinkard, "The Logic of Hegel's *Logic*," *Journal for the History of Philosophy* 17 (1979), 417–435 (pp. 424–428).

[24] G. W. F. Hegel, *The Science of Logic*, trans. G. Di Giovanni (Cambridge University Press, 2010), p. 28.

[25] Accordingly, one of Hegel's criticisms of Spinoza is the charge that Spinoza has no place for negativity in his philosophy. See, e.g., Hegel, *Vorlesungen*, W 20:164.

the same counts, *mutatis mutandis*, for categories. Negations are the traces of reality in the conceptual realm. Now, if a conceptual claim encounters its negation, it has to be replaced by a new concept that proposes to fulfill the original claim. With the new concept, new claims enter the game, new negations appear, and new moves toward new concepts have to be made. In short, for Hegel, the inferential texture of thinking is ruled by negations. This central role of negations eliminates, step by step, the danger of conceptual vacuity. If negations are the traces of reality in the conceptual, the overcoming of all negations amounts to the status of having integrated all reality into the conceptual. And then reasoning is not spinning in a void, but saturated with reality. Such saturation is achieved no earlier than by the closure of the conceptual realm itself. Given the premise that negations rule the inferential texture of thinking, they are overcome no earlier than at the end of all inferences. In other words, the inferential web has to be completed. The encounter of a conceptual totality that has negations as its internal relations, but itself can no longer be negated, ensures that the conceptual has conceived the real. The realm of concepts has to be closed. Yet the closure of the conceptual realm is the final result of reasoning, a result that stands at the end of the chains of inferences. Accordingly, the saturation of thought with reality is achieved at the end of categorial development. We can now understand what Hegel's term "absolute idea" is meant to denote. Its content is the closed system of thought itself. In it, all inferences have been principally made, and all notional tendencies have been articulated, at least in their general outline, so that no further negation has to be made. This is inferentialism in its boldest version. And it is strongly metaphysical in nature.[26] For it identifies thought and reality, so that the great chain of conceptual change becomes the great chain of being.

Hegel's three charges against Spinoza have found the model of metaphysical inferentialism they demanded. Spinoza's primordial concepts, which were supposed to guarantee the soundness of reasoning, are replaced by the closure of the system, whose end establishes the reality of thought. Spinoza's intuitive science, in turn, is replaced by the totality of inferential steps in the closed system of thought. And the system, finally, is articulated by the absolute idea through which the conceptual refers

[26] I do not want to start here the quarrel about the metaphysical or non-metaphysical nature of Hegel's philosophy. I take it to be metaphysical in the sense of my argument. On the debate, see F. Beiser, "Hegel and the Problem of Metaphysics," in Beiser (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Hegel* (Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 1–25; and Dean Moyar's chapter in this volume, pp. 197–213.

to itself. The whole of conceptual content is thus a self-referential whole: "substance" has become "subject." This model of metaphysical inferentialism drastically changes the shape of philosophy. Spinoza's model is cast as first philosophy, which tries to secure the principles of thought from which sound thinking can proceed. Hegel's philosophy, in contrast, transforms all alleged principles into the open texture of thinking whose soundness is not justified before the end. It recasts metaphysical inferentialism as *philosophia ultima*. Such *philosophia ultima* alters the common notion of metaphysics. Consider a famous attack against metaphysical thinking. "Among the superstitions from which we are freed by the abandonment of metaphysics," says Alfred Jules Ayer, "is the view that it is the business of the philosopher to construct a deductive system. In rejecting this view we are not, of course, suggesting that the philosopher can dispense with deductive reasoning. We are simply contesting his right to posit certain first principles, and then offer them with their consequences as a complete picture of reality."[27] According to these lines, first philosophy and metaphysics go hand in hand. However, the rejection of first philosophy is not identical with the elimination of metaphysics. It eliminates only a specific case of metaphysics – first philosophy. The possibility of ultimate philosophy, in contrast, remains unconsidered.

We can thus render Ayer's statement into its Hegelian form: "Among the superstitions from which we are freed by the abandonment of first philosophy is the view that it is the business of the metaphysician to construct a deductive system." This sentence contains Hegel's criticisms of Spinoza in a nutshell. His own model of metaphysical inferentialism claims to provide the alternative.

[27] A. J. Ayer, *Language, Truth, and Logic* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1971), p. 62.

CHAPTER 13

Trendelenburg and Spinoza

Frederick Beiser

SPINOZISM IN THE LONG IDEALIST TRADITION

I must begin with an apology for my subject. In a collection devoted to Spinoza and German Idealism it seems to be a bit off-topic to discuss Trendelenburg and Spinoza. It is a commonplace of the history of philosophy that German Idealism comes to an end with Hegel's death in 1831. Trendelenburg, however, if he is remembered for anything, is known for his *critique* of Hegel, especially his assault against Hegel's dialectic in his 1840 *Logische Untersuchungen*. So that seems to place him *outside* the tradition of German Idealism, and beyond the scope of our theme. Beiser, it seems, is stretching it (yet again), and it is only due to the indulgence of the editors that he has been able to slip this one under the wire.

Thankful though I am for the editors' forbearance, I want to claim that my subject really is not that off the topic after all. Indeed, I contend herewith that it is necessary to consider Trendelenburg and Spinoza if one wants to do full justice to the theme of German Idealism and Spinoza. Why? Because the commonplace view that German Idealism ends with Hegel is really deeply mistaken, on both conceptual and historical grounds. The problem with this view is simple but insurmountable: the same criteria by which we describe Schelling and Hegel as "idealists" apply perfectly well to later major thinkers of the nineteenth century. If, very roughly, we define "idealism" as the doctrine that all reality is an appearance of the idea – a definition that surely fits Schelling and Hegel – then we have to expand the Idealist tradition beyond Hegel. We have to extend it to at least two thinkers of the later nineteenth century: namely, Trendelenburg and Lotze.[1] They too were idealists in just this sense. They

[1] Of course, there are other thinkers whom we would have to place in this tradition, though none of them is as major as Trendelenburg and Lotze. Among them were Christian Hermann Weiße (1801–1866), Immanuel Hermann Fichte (1797–1879), and Heinrich Moritz Chalybäus (1796–1862), thinkers who usually fall under the label of *Spätidealismus*. For a brief treatment of Weiße

not only explicitly defended such a doctrine in their major writings, but they also self-consciously placed themselves in the Idealist tradition. So, following a simple and straightforward definition of idealism, we have to stretch the Idealist tradition beyond Hegel up to Lotze. That tradition does not end with cholera in 1831 but with a cold in 1881.

What makes the standard view especially problematic from a broader historical perspective is that Trendelenburg and Lotze were, with no exaggeration, the two most influential philosophers in Germany from the 1840s to the 1880s. Not only were their writings widely read, but they also occupied major posts for decades: Trendelenburg was professor in Berlin from 1835 to 1870, and Lotze was professer in Göttingen from 1844 to 1880. A list of their students sounds like a veritable 'who's who' of German philosophy after 1880. Among Lotze's students were Frege, Royce and Windelband; among Trendelenburg's students were Dilthey, Brentano, and Cohen.

All this has important implications for our theme. For if we extend the Idealist tradition down to 1881, we need to ask about the reception of Spinoza after Hegel. This is very interesting and very unexplored territory.[2] All kinds of questions arise in dealing with it. Namely, how was the later reception of Spinoza like the earlier one? And how did it differ? What, if any, were the abiding sympathies or antipathies that tradition had for Spinoza? How was the reception of Spinoza affected by the new intellectual currents of the nineteenth century, especially the rise of historicism in the 1830s and the emergence of materialism after the 1850s?

My task now is to consider the reception of Spinoza in only one central figure of the later Idealist tradition, namely, Friedrich Adolph Trendelenburg (1802–1872). I choose to focus on him chiefly for three reasons. First, his interpretation and critique of Spinoza are intrinsically interesting, as worthy of discussion today as they were in the mid nineteenth century. Second, Trendelenburg played a major role in the reception of Spinoza in the nineteenth century. He was not only a pioneer in advocating and practicing a more historical approach to the texts, but he was also among the very first to appreciate and write about the *tractatus brevis*. Third, within the Idealist tradition itself, Trendelenburg had

and Fichte – one of the very few available – see G. Lehmann, *Geschichte der Philosophie: Die Philosophie des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts,* 9 vols., Vol. 11 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1953), pp. 11–17.

[2] An excellent starting point is H. U. Schneider, "Spinoza in der deutschen Philosophiegeschichtsschreibung," in *Spinoza in der europäischen Geistesgeschichte* (Berlin: Edition Hentrich, 1994), pp. 305–331. Schneider expands his treatment of this theme in his *Philosophie und Universität* (Hamburg: Meiner, 1999), pp. 249–316.

the most subtle and sophisticated response to Spinoza. He not only had a much more scholarly and informed approach to the texts, but he also attempted to understand Spinoza on his own terms, independent of his own idealist commitments.

As is only fitting for Trendelenburg, one of the greatest historians of philosophy of his age, my approach to him will have to be historical and genetic. Nothing less will do because Trendelenburg's attitude toward Spinoza underwent striking and dramatic changes. His writings on Spinoza stretch over thirty years, and his later writings correct the earlier ones. So there is a story to tell, which has four brief episodes. Each of the following sections will be devoted to one of them.

EARLY VIEW OF SPINOZA

Trendelenburg's early views about Spinoza emerge in his major philosophical work, his *Logische Untersuchungen*, which first appeared in 1840.[3] What Trendelenburg writes about Spinoza here is typical of the Idealist tradition. He finds in Spinoza the same flaws as Schelling and Hegel, as Novalis and Schlegel. We hear that old refrain: there is no place for life, there is no place for individuality, in Spinoza's system.

To understand Trendelenburg's early attitude toward Spinoza we need to know a little about the purpose and content of the *Logische Untersuchungen*. The best brief account of that purpose and content is provided by Trendelenburg himself in the Preface to the second edition, where he describes his philosophy as "the organic worldview."[4] He regards this worldview, whose origins he traces back to Plato and Aristotle, as the true *philosophia perennis*. The best statement of that worldview, on Trendelenburg's own reckoning, is Plato's *Timaeus*, which describes the entire world as "a living being with soul and intelligence" (30b), or as "a single visible living being" (30d). Behind Plato's metaphor there lay two closely connected theses. First, that everything in nature is animated, suffused with life, so that it is not simply inert matter; and, second, that nature as a whole is governed by ends or purposes, an intelligent design, so that it is not just a meaningless "concourse of atoms." If we put both theses together, we get the concept of nature as a single vast organism, as

[3] There were two more editions of this work, in 1862 and 1870. There are important differences between them.

[4] A. Trendelenburg, *Logische Untersuchungen*, 2 vols., 3rd edn. (Berlin: Bethge, 1870), Vol. 1, p. ix.

one giant *macroanthropos*. It was the purpose of Trendelenburg's work to rehabilitate this classical worldview in the modern age.

Trendelenburg's attempt to revive the organic worldview reveals his allegiance to the German Idealist tradition. It was essentially the same worldview that Schelling and Hegel had attempted to rehabilitate in their *Naturphilosophie* some forty years earlier. It is striking that Trendelenburg shared Schelling's love of Plato's *Timaeus* and Hegel's admiration for Aristotle's *Metaphysics*. Identifying with the classical past and attempting to revive its cosmology were abiding characteristics of the Idealist tradition. Trendelenburg differs from his great predecessors, however, in one important respect: while he accepts the content of the classical doctrine, he rejects earlier attempts to demonstrate it. Schelling's method of mathematical construction, as well as Hegel's dialectical method, he finds much too speculative. Such methods seem to him to engage in *Begriffspiel*, imposing arbitrary and artificial conceptual schemes onto a complex empirical reality. To avoid such problems, Trendelenburg called for a reorientation of philosophy around the empirical sciences, so that its primary task would be the investigation of their logic.

In attempting to rehabilitate the organic worldview, Trendelenburg resolved to take on its past and present detractors. Not least among them, of course, was Spinoza. And sure enough, in Section 4 of Chapter 8 of the first edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, a chapter devoted to the defense of teleology, Trendelenburg duly engages in brief polemic against Spinoza.[5] Rather than reading the organic worldview into Spinoza, as Herder had done, Trendelenburg sees Spinoza very much in Jacobi's terms as an enemy of that worldview, as the arch-mechanist and -naturalist. Hence he describes the chief characteristics of Spinoza's system as "the annihilation of purpose, the sovereignty of efficient causes" ("die Vernichtung des Zweckes, die Alleinherrschaft der wirkenden Ursache"; p. 43). Following now hallowed idealist practice, Trendelenburg finds two chief problems with Spinoza's system: its lack of life, and its lack of individuality. The following passage sums up his entire polemic:

> The investigation of the organic as the organic is completely missing in him. Spinoza sinks everything into the sublime intuition of the [single] powerful substance; but just because he lacks the concept of purpose, he gives no value to individual life, which only whirls around like a speck of dust upon substance and then sinks back into the great grave of necessity. (p. 41)

[5] *Ibid*., Vol. II, pp. 38–43.

All in all, it has to be said that Trendelenburg's treatment of Spinoza in the *Logische Untersuchungen* is very unsatisfactory. Rather than grappling with any of the details of Spinoza's arguments, he simply points out what he regards as their dreadful moral consequences. Trendelenburg even concludes the section by stating that these consequences alone stand as "indirect proof for the meaning of purpose" in his own worldview (p. 43). It is as if we should accept teleology on moral grounds alone! What had Trendelenburg done but kick again Lessing's dead dog?

It was to Trendelenburg's credit, however, that he soon abandoned this type of polemic, the kind so typical of the Idealist tradition.[6] His later writings on Spinoza not only show very careful scholarship, but they also demand strictly internal criticism. Just why this moral conversion came about is not entirely clear; but I will offer some conjectures later in my narrative.

LEIBNIZ *ECHT DEUTSCH*?

Trendelenburg's next writing on Spinoza was his article, "Leibnizens Schrift *de vita beata* und sein angeblicher Spinozismus oder Cartesianismus," which was first published in 1847.[7] Though the main subject of this article is Leibniz, Trendelenburg also writes about Spinoza's influence upon him. His central thesis is that Leibniz was never a Spinozist.

The background to Trendelenburg's article is a dispute begun in 1840 by Johann Eduard Erdmann in his edition of Leibniz's *Opera philosophica*.[8] This edition contained some new hitherto unpublished writings of Leibniz, one of which was his *De vita beata*, an early writing composed sometime in 1676.[9] In his introduction Erdmann stated that this writing was proof that Leibniz was in his youth a follower of Descartes and Spinoza.[10] Erdmann's thesis was then embraced by Christian Hermann Weisse, who

[6] Trendelenburg republished in the 1867 edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen* the short section on Spinoza from the 1840 edition. He only added a short paragraph referring to his *Über Spinozas Grundgedanken und dessen Erfolg* (Vol. II, p. 42, 1867 edition). Though his approach to Spinoza had changed dramatically, his basic conclusions remained the same. He probably kept the earlier polemic because he felt his later work had now vindicated it.

[7] First published in *Monatsberichte der Berliner Akademie der Wissenschaften* (1847), 372–386. Reprinted in A. Trendelenburg, *Historische Beträge zur Philosophie*, 2 vols. (Berlin: Bethge, 1855–1867), Vol. II, pp. 192–232. All references in parentheses are to this later edition.

[8] G. W. Leibniz, *Leibnizii opera philosophica quae exstant Latina, Gallica, Germanica omnia*, ed. J. E. Erdmann (Berlin: Eichler, 1840).

[9] G. W. Leibniz, *Sämtliche Schriften und Briefe*, Akademie Ausgabe (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1923–), Series VI: *Philosophische Schriften*, Vol. III, pp. 1–6, no. 89.

[10] *Ibid*., p. xi.

reviewed his edition of Leibniz in the *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie*.[11] It is significant that both Erdmann and Weisse were Hegelian philosophers, and that they saw Leibniz's early Spinozism as evidence for a Hegelian view of the history of philosophy. According to that Hegelian view, each new philosopher creates a synthesis of the work of his predecessors, preserving their truths and canceling their errors. To get to that higher synthesis, a philosopher will pass through the apprenticeship of his predecessors, holding their doctrines before he discovers their errors.

In his article Trendelenburg takes issue with both Erdmann and Weisse. Through a long and careful comparison of Leibniz's text and some passages from Descartes' writings, he shows that *De vita beata* was really not a statement of Leibniz's philosophical views at all but only a collection of extracts from Descartes (pp. 199–227). Trendelenburg then goes on to cast doubt on Leibniz's alleged Spinozism. He argues that Leibniz's intellectual development was very rapid, and that by the age of twenty-five he had already formulated the core of his doctrines (p. 194). Leibniz could not have been influenced by Spinoza, not only because he had vehemently rejected Spinoza's *Tractatus* when he had first read it, but also because the *Ethica* had not appeared until 1677, too late for the formation of his early views (pp. 194, 231–232).

Trendelenburg's view about Leibniz's rapid and continuous intellectual development is no longer the *consensus gentium* among Leibniz scholars. The trend nowadays has been to focus more on the changes in Leibniz's intellectual development, and some scholars have stressed the role of Spinoza in it.[12] While Leibniz might not have been a Spinozist, as Erdmann and Weisse contended, he was still very much concerned to respond to Spinoza's thinking, which was a major challenge for him. It seems, then, that we might as well relegate Trendelenburg's article to the dustbin of antiquated scholarship.

Recently, however, great significance has been attributed to it in the history of Spinoza's reception in Germany. Ursula Goldenbaum attributes to Trendelenburg – partly because of his position in the Berlin Akademie, and partly because of his professorship in Berlin – a powerful role in propagating the older view of Leibniz's intellectual

[11] C. H. Weisse, "Die philosophische Literatur der Gegenwart," *Zeitschrift für Philosophie und spekulative Theologie* 3 (1841), 255–304, esp. p. 261.

[12] See especially U. Goldenbaum, "Die *Commentatiuncula de judice* als Leibnizens erste philosophische Auseinandersetzung mit Spinoza nebst der Mitteilung über ein neuaufgefundenes Leibnizstück," *Studia Leibnitiana Sonderheft* 29 (1999), 61–97.

development.[13] She regards Trendelenburg as a conservative Christian nationalist, and she suggests that, in disputing Spinoza's influence on Leibniz, he wanted to make Leibniz into a German national philosopher free from Jewish influence.[14]

I find Goldenbaum's thesis problematic for several reasons. First, Trendelenburg, by the standards of his day, was not a conservative but a moderate liberal, and in that role he served as a representative in the Frankfurt Parliament in 1848. There is no evidence I have found for his holding anti-Semitic views; and it is noteworthy that, in his *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*, his main work on social and political thought, he defended religious toleration.[15] Second, as a matter of fact Trendelenburg was *not* reluctant at all to admit Spinoza's influence on Leibniz. After the publication of new sources on Spinoza in 1862, he stressed Spinoza's influence upon Tschirnhaus – another German Christian philosopher – and then castigated Tschirnhaus for not having acknowledged it. He then went on to claim that Leibniz had learned from Tschirnhaus what Spinoza had taught him years earlier.[16] This is hardly the attitude of a reactionary nationalist who wants to keep his compatriots *echt deutsch*. Third, Trendelenburg's real concern in this article is not keeping German philosophers free from Jewish influence, as Goldenbaum implies, but keeping Hegelianism out of the history of philosophy. In the introduction to the article he states clearly the Hegelian view, and it is clear that he intends to combat it. Trendelenburg opposed the a-priori methods of Hegelianism, which forced history into artificial molds: namely, that later philosophers had to internalize yet refute earlier philosophers. It is indeed no accident that Erdmann and Weisse were among Trendelenburg's old Hegelian foes, and that he saw them up to their usual dialectical mischief, now in the history of philosophy rather than in the realm of logic.[17]

[13] U. Goldenbaum, "Why Shouldn't Leibniz Have Studied Spinoza? The Rise of the Claim of Continuity in Leibniz' Philosophy Out of the Ideological Rejection of Spinoza's Impact on Leibniz," *The Leibniz Review* 17 (2007), 107–140.

[14] *Ibid*., pp. 117–118, 121.

[15] A. Trendelenburg, *Naturrecht auf dem Grunde der Ethik*, 2nd edn. (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1868), pp. 394–395, §172; p. 398, §172, supplementary note. It is noteworthy that Trendelenburg stressed the importance of Mosaic law for the development of civilization (pp. 108–109). His views here were later cited by Hermann Cohen to prove his thesis that Judaism was a religion of reason. See H. Cohen, "Deutschtum und Judentum," in *Werke*, ed. H. Holzhey *et al*. (Hildesheim: Olms, 1997), p. 482.

[16] See "Ueber die aufgefundenen Ergänzungen zu Spinoza's Werken und deren Ertrag für Spinozas Leben und Lehre," in Trendelenburg, *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie*, Vol. III, p. 289.

[17] See A. Trendelenburg, *Die logische Frage in Hegels System* (Leipzig: Brockhaus, 1843), pp. 19–20, 35. See also the second 1862 edition of the *Logische Untersuchungen*, Vol. I, pp. 93, 115, where

SPINOZA'S BASIC THOUGHT

Trendelenburg's most important writing on Spinoza is his *Über Spinozas Grundgedanken und dessen Erfolg*, which he delivered as an address to the *Gesamtsitzung* of the Prussian Academy of Sciences on March 1, 1849.[18] The setting of this address is quite significant for the reception of Spinoza in Germany. The Prussian Academy of Sciences was the inner sanctum of German learning, and Trendelenburg was effectively sanctifying Spinoza by discussing him there. This was an important act of homage, one comparable to Schleiermacher's act a half century earlier.[19]

Über Spinozas Grundgedanken und dessen Erfolg is the most subtle, sophisticated and sympathetic interpretation of Spinoza in the Idealist tradition. It shows a much superior command of the texts, and it sets new standards of interpretation. Abandoning his earlier polemical approach in the *Logische Untersuchungen*, Trendelenburg now follows a rigorous historical methodology, which consists in two basic standards. First, he demands that we grasp a philosopher in his individuality, i.e., that we determine what is new, unique, and irreducible about him, that we determine how he differs from his predecessors and contemporaries. This demand for an understanding of an author's individuality is one of the fruits of the new historicism that blossomed in Berlin in the 1820s. What Ranke, Humboldt, and Droysen wanted to do for history in general Trendelenburg now wanted to do for the history of philosophy. He stated this demand perfectly explicitly in the Foreword to his *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre*: "Without concern for the facts of the case there is no right to judgment. It is the first duty of the scholar to grasp the historical in its individuality; and only after the fulfillment of this duty comes the second [duty]: to demonstrate what has been done and what has not been achieved."[20] Second, Trendelenburg insists that criticism of a philosopher should be internal or immanent. Rather than condemning a philosopher's ideas according to the standards of some opposing system, it is necessary to examine them from within, according to the philosopher's own

Trendelenburg deals with Erdmann's and Weisse's attempt to defend Hegel's logic against his criticisms in the first 1840 edition.

[18] First published separately in Berlin, 1850 by Bethge Verlag. It was reproduced in Trendelenburg, *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie*, Vol. II, pp. 31–111. All references in parentheses are to the later edition.

[19] F. D. Schleiermacher, *Über die Religion: Reden an die Gebildeten unter ihren Verächtern* (1799), in KGA, Vol. II:213: "*Opfert mit mir ehrerbietig eine Loke den Manen des heiligen verstoßenen Spinosa* [*sic*]*!*"

[20] A. Trendelenburg, "Vorwort," in *Geschichte der Kategorienlehre* (Berlin: Bethge, 1846) p. viii.

standards and intentions. We should determine whether the philosopher is consistent, whether he achieves everything he sets out to do; and we should not assign him marks according to whether he is what we, his critics, think he should be. Trendelenburg makes this demand very explicit in *Über Spinozas Grundgedanken*: "Only in the basic idea and its consequences, only in the task that this idea sets for itself and in its attempt to resolve it should we judge a system, i.e., not according to some foreign weight but according to its own measure." (p. 39)

Whence this change in Trendelenburg's approach to Spinoza? Why had he abandoned his earlier polemical style? Part of the answer lies in the occasion or setting: the Akademie wanted not polemics but scholarship. After all, the purpose of the Akademie was to make and keep standards. In 1847 Trendelenburg was elected Secretary to its philosophical-historical section, and surely he would want to play the part. Having been elected on the basis of his work on Aristotle, the members would naturally expect that he apply to Spinoza the standards he used with Aristotle. Another part of the answer is that there was an important precedent for this more scholarly approach to Spinoza, one that Trendelenburg would surely want to follow. That precedent was no less than Schleiermacher. In 1813, in his role as a member of the philosophical section of the Akademie, Schleiermacher attempted to encourage a more scholarly approach to Spinoza by initiating a prize competition on the topic of Descartes' influence on Spinoza.[21] Trendelenburg revered Schleiermacher, and he would want to follow his example.

Trendelenburg's canonization of Spinoza is nothing less than the central thesis of *Über Spinozas Grundgedanken und dessen Erfolg*. Trendelenburg argues that Spinoza occupies a unique and fundamental place in the history of philosophy. There are only three possible systems of philosophy: idealism, materialism, and Spinozism. How did Trendelenburg justify such grand claims? Why only three possible systems? The essence of his argument appears in another earlier academy address, "Über den letzten Unterschied der philosophischen Systeme," which he gave in November 18, 1847.[22] There Trendelenburg attempts to find the fundamental problem of philosophy and the only possible answers to it. This problem concerns

[21] Schneider, "Spinoza in der deutschen Philosophiegeschichtsschreibung," p. 314.

[22] First published in *Philologische und historische Abhandlungen der königlichen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin* (Berlin: Dümmler, 1847), pp. 241–262. It was later published in Trendelenburg, *Historische Beiträge zur Philosophie*, Vol. II, pp. 1–30. All references in parentheses are to the original edition.

the relationship between thought and being, or, as he puts it, between thought and "power," where "power" stands for the cause of being when it is taken on its own independent of all thinking (pp. 244–245). There are three possible positions to take regarding the relationship between thought and being. We can place power before thought, so that power is the fundamental term and thought its product or result. Or we can place thought before power, so that thought is the fundamental term, and power its product or result. Or, finally, we can see neither thought nor power as fundamental but only as different attributes of one and the same thing (pp. 247–248). The first position was that of the materialists, who were the ancient atomists or the French *philosophes*; the second was that of the idealists, who were Plato and Aristotle; and the third, of course, was that of Spinoza (pp. 248–249).

Trendelenburg's classification is obviously simplistic, but it is also deliberately so, attempting to reduce many complex systems down to their lowest common denominator. He warns us that these positions should be taken in a very general sense and that they should not be confused with particular historical figures (pp. 249–250). The simplicity and generality of Trendelenburg's scheme has been the object of criticism. Ulrich Johannes Schneider, for one, finds Trendelenburg's scheme much too reductionist, because it makes Spinoza into a cardboard figure on an intellectual chessboard.[23] But Schneider underestimates, I believe, Trendelenburg's intentions: though his scheme is very abstract and simplistic, its purpose is to grasp Spinoza in his individuality. Trendelenburg was attempting to avoid what had been done so often in the past: making Spinoza into one of the other alternatives, an idealist or materialist. To him, that was where the danger of reductivism lay.

It is also important to see the more specific concerns and meaning underlying Trendelenburg's classificatory scheme. The conflict between materialism and idealism is for Trendelenburg essentially a dispute about fundamental forms of explanation and not one about basic forms of entity. The crucial question for him is whether mechanism or teleology should be the ultimate form of explanation. Materialism is not the thesis that matter is all that exists but the thesis that mechanism explains everything. Idealism is not the thesis that only thinking beings exist but the thesis that teleology explains everything. By "thought" he does not mean

[23] Schneider, "Spinoza in der deutschen Philosophiegeschichtsschreibung," pp. 316–317, 318, 321–322.

the thoughts of this or that self-conscious subject but the ideas or forms of Plato and Aristotle (p. 247).

Understanding Trendelenburg's classification in this more precise way is important for his interpretation of Spinoza. The implications are spelled out by Trendelenburg himself in *Über Spinoza's Grundgedanken* (p. 33). Previous philosophical systems, he explains, were either teleological, where thought rules over being, or they were mechanical, where being rules over thought. Spinoza's system is new and original, however, precisely because it is neither mechanical nor teleological; it does not subordinate being to thought nor thought to being, because it makes them equal and independent attributes of one and the same thing. In coming to this reading of Spinoza, Trendelenburg stresses what he calls "the parallelism" of the attributes, according to which each attribute must be understood independently of the other (p. 35). This means that extension and thought cannot interact with one another, so that one cannot be understood as the product of another. To justify this reading Trendelenburg cites especially E3p2: "*Nec corpus mentem ad cogitandum, nec mens corpus ad motum, neque ad quietem, nec ad aliquid (si quid est) aliud determinare potest*." (pp. 35, 37). This parallelism doctrine is the true meaning, Trendelenburg says, of Spinoza's famous proposition in E2p7: "*Ordo et connexio idearum idem est ac ordo et connexio rerum*" (p. 35).

From the standpoint of the reception of Spinoza's philosophy, the striking point about Trendelenburg's interpretation is his thesis that Spinoza's philosophy is not mechanistic. Trendelenburg explicitly draws just this conclusion, and he stresses its importance (pp. 37–38). He argues that Spinoza cannot be a materialist any more than an idealist because this would require *per impossible* that thought and extension interact with one another. In stressing the point Trendelenburg was taking issue especially with Jacobi's notorious materialist reading of Spinoza in his *Briefe über die Lehre von Spinoza*.[24] Trendelenburg himself endorsed that reading in his *Logische Untersuchungen*. Now, however, he expressly targets Jacobi's reading, claiming that it has completely misunderstood Spinoza's central and characteristic doctrine (p. 38).

Prima facie, Trendelenburg's interpretation of Spinoza is only recycling an older idealist reading, more specificially that of Schelling and Hegel during their Jena years. After all, Schelling and Hegel were no less opposed to Jacobi's one-sided mechanistic reading, and they saw their own

[24] F. H. Jacobi, *Briefe über die Lehre von Spinoza*, in *Werke*, ed. F. Roth and F. Köppen (Leipzig: Gerhard Fleischer d. Jüng., 1812–1825), IV/2:95. See also IV/1:56, and IV/2:145–146, 153–155, 159.

principle of subject-object identity as another formulation for Spinoza's thesis that thought and extension are different attributes of one and the same thing. Upon closer inspection, though, Trendelenburg's reading of Spinoza proves to be decidedly different from that of his idealist predecessors. For Schelling and Hegel read their own vitalist and teleological principles into Spinoza, who, doubtless, would have turned over in his grave. Their interpretation of Spinoza, which is deliberately normative rather than historical, holds that the single infinite substance, when understood as it is "in itself," should be the purposive or archetypical, the inner nature or essence of things before its development into the multiplicity of finite modes or forms. Trendelenburg, whose reading is deliberately historical rather than normative, would have regarded this as another one-sided distortion of Spinoza's intention, which meant to exclude the teleological as much as the mechanistic. So, in Trendelenburg's view, Schelling and Hegel simply embraced the opposite error to that made by Jacobi, interpreting Spinoza now from a one-sided teleological standpoint rather than a one-sided mechanistic one.

Having laid down his demand for an immanent critique, Trendelenburg duly attempts to provide one in *Über Spinozas Grundgedanken*. The crucial question for him is whether Spinoza remains true to his own fundamental thought, i.e., whether he provides it with a sufficient justification, and whether he remains true to it in the execution of his system. Trendelenburg's critique is probing and thorough, showing a full mastery of the details of Spinoza's system. There are copious citations and footnotes to Spinoza's text, all in the *ipsissimma verba* of the original Latin. While his criticisms are hardly unanswerable – when are any ever so? – they are surely worthy of discussion. Here I will state in a very sketchy and summary way some highlights of a very long article.

First, Trendelenburg thinks that Spinoza provides a much too weak foundation for his basic idea, i.e., his parallelism or denial of mental–physical interaction, according to which extended things are to be conceived only under the attribute of extension and thinking things only under the attribute of thought (pp. 53–54). He finds Spinoza's main argument for this thesis arbitrary and formal, resting on his axioms and definitions alone. According to Trendelenburg, Spinoza argues as follows: that attributes express the essence of substance; and since substance is conceived in itself, each attribute should be conceived in itself, apart from its relation to any other attribute (p. 53). He asks why the attribute of a substance should share the property of the thing of which it is an attribute? Why must the attribute's expression of the essence of substance – namely,

its independence and self-sufficiency – mean that the attribute itself is independent and self-sufficient? Trendelenburg suggests that there is a type-fallacy here: an accurate idea of a thing need not have the properties of the thing. My idea of a cat is not furry, and my idea of a dog does not bark.

Second, Trendelenburg thinks that Spinoza has not provided an adequate account of sense perception according to his basic idea (pp. 54–55). If Spinoza is to remain true to his basic idea, then the causes of representations of bodies cannot be these bodies themselves. This is the simple and commonsense view, but Spinoza cannot allow it, for it requires that mental representations have physical causes. Rather than saying a physical body is the cause of its mental representation, Spinoza has to say that these representations are caused by God insofar as God is a thinking thing. It is incumbent upon Spinoza to show that there is some process of thinking in God whereby the representations of sensible things arise without the action of those things themselves. But Spinoza never provides such an explanation.

Third, Trendelenburg notes a lack of parallelism in how thoughts and bodies inhere in the single universal substance (pp. 58–59). Bodies can be conceived in a continuum so that they form a single whole; but thoughts do not form such a continuum. Infinite extension is the totality of all finite extended bodies or modes, but infinite thought is not the totality of all finite thoughts, for infinite thought grasps the whole of all things whereas finite thought grasps only particular finite things (p. 63). Furthermore, finite thoughts are often mistaken, and so cannot be within the divine intellect, whose ideas are always adequate to things (p. 63–64).

Fourth, Trendelenburg charges Spinoza with violating his parallelism thesis in the final books of the *Ethica* when he gives the understanding a power to guide and control the affections (pp. 84, 89). Since the affections belong to the body, this is to give thought a power over the body, contrary to the ban on interaction. In general, Trendelenburg thinks that Spinoza covertly reintroduces teleological concepts that he had banished in the Appendix to Book 1. His concept of self-preservation and his ideal of human nature make sense, he argues, only if they are understood as purposes or ends of human action. But to reinvoke teleology is to violate the parallelism doctrine, which does not allow modes of thought to have an effect on modes of extension.

So, in the end, though Trendelenburg credits Spinoza with having an original idea, he faults him for having failed to execute it in his system. He concludes his critique by saying that the *Ethica* divides into half where

each half violates the original idea in a different way. The original idea demands that thought and extension should be on a par, two equal and independent attributes of the single universal substance. But in Books I and II the attribute of extension takes precedent over thought, partly because all teleology is banished, and partly because ideas are made into images and effects of things. In Books III to V, however, the attribute of thought takes precedence over extension, partly because now the power of the understanding rules over affections, and partly because final causes, implicit in the concept of self-preservation, play a decisive role in determining conduct. So it was all too understandable, Trendelenburg thinks, that Spinoza's system inspired two antithetical ways of thinking, the first two books materialism and the last three idealism (p. 108).[25]

NEW TEXTS, OLD DISPUTES

Our story is not yet at an end. For Trendelenburg's concern with Spinoza continued undiminished for another twenty years. His next work on Spinoza was in fact his longest – some 125 pages – his *Ueber die aufgefundenen Ergänzungen zu Spinozas Werken und deren Ertrag für Spinozas Leben und Lehre*,[26] which was originally an address delivered in three installments to the *Gesamtsitzung* of the Akademie, first on July 17, 1862, then on February 2, 1865, and finally on March 15, 1866. The occasion for this work was, from the standpoint of Spinoza scholarship, very exciting: the first publication of Spinoza's short treatise. In 1862 Johannes van Vloten, a Dutch scholar in Amsterdam, had published some new, hitherto unpublished writings of Spinoza: the short treatise, five new letters, materials about Spinoza's life, and a treatise on the rainbow.[27] Naturally, all kinds of questions arose about this material, and especially about the short treatise. Was this work really authentic? When did Spinoza write it? What did it show about Spinoza's intellectual development? And how did its doctrines differ from those of the *Ethica*?

Trendelenburg was not the first scholar to publish about these discoveries. He was pipped at the post by Christoph Sigwart, who in 1866

[25] Schneider, "Spinoza in der deutschen Philosophiegeschichtsschreibung," p. 318, writes: "Was Trendelenburg das 'Schwanken' Spinozas nennt, ist im Grunde das Schwanken der Ordnungskriterien des Historikers." This is to beg the question, given that Trendelenburg has argued that Spinoza himself does not keep to his own original idea.

[26] *Historische Beiträge zur Philsophie*, Vol. III, pp. 277–398.

[27] B. de Spinoza, *Ad Benedicti de Spinoza opera quae supersunt omnia supplementum*, ed. J. van Vloten (Amsterdam: Muller, 1862).

published an entire book about the short treatise.[28] Still, Trendelenburg's first address to the Akademie was very quick off the mark, given in the same year as van Vloten's work appeared. In his opening paragraphs Trendelenburg mentions Sigwart's work, which he praises, though he says it appeared too late for him to take it into account (p. 278).

Most of Trendelenburg's work is a discussion of the contents of the short treatise and a comparison of it with the *Ethica*. Despite the loss of the original Latin manuscript, Trendelenburg is convinced of the authenticity of the short treatise, which he says should now be accepted "ohne Bedenken" (p. 354). His general thesis is that the short treatise reveals Spinoza's intellectual development between Cartesianism and his own mature philosophy, which appears fully only in the *Ethica* (p. 357). Of course, these are not surprising conclusions from a contemporary standpoint, now that we have had nearly a century and a half to assimilate the importance of the short treatise. They show us, however, how much Trendelenburg was in the vanguard of Spinoza scholarship in the nineteenth century.

On the whole Trendelenburg's last work on Spinoza is filled with textual details, which we need not consider here. There is, however, one curious fact about this work that I should mention. Among Kant scholars, Trendelenburg is still remembered today for his famous dispute with Kuno Fischer about Kant's neglected "third alternative": Trendelenburg affirmed while Fischer denied that Kant's arguments for the a-priori status of space and time would allow these forms to be true of things-in-themselves. It is extraordinary that such an abstract issue could be the subject of one of the most acrimonious intellectual controversies of the nineteenth century. But so it was. The dispute between Trendelenburg and Fischer became a spectacle in German intellectual life in the 1860s, notorious more for its heat than its light. Its contestants did their best to besmirch their opponent's reputation as well as miss the point of their arguments. Now it so happens that Trendelenburg and Fischer first clashed with one another over Spinoza, well before the dispute about Kant. The young Kuno Fischer had first criticized Trendelenburg's interpretation of Spinoza in 1854 in the first edition of his *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*.[29] It comes as no surprise, then, to see that the dispute over Spinoza continued in their later years. In his last work on Spinoza Trendelenburg engages in

[28] C. Sigwart, *Spinozas neuentdeckter Tractat von Gott, den Menschen und dessen Glückseligkeit* (Gotha: Johannes Kepler Verlag, 1868).

[29] K. Fischer, *Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Mannheim: Bassermann, pp. 568–574.

a long polemic against Fischer's interpretation of Spinoza in the second edition of his *Geschichte*, taking issue with him on a number of points, especially his account of the attributes (pp. 361–376). Trendelenburg did not miss the opportunity of tweaking Fischer for failing to take the short treatise into account (p. 278).

For reasons of time and space, I will have to leave aside here the Trendelenburg–Fischer dispute about Spinoza. Though marred by intemperance and intolerance, it still contains many interesting exchanges about how to interpret Spinoza, which are worth uncovering on some other occasion. For now I leave you with a quote from the most famous Spinoza controversialist of them all. Just before the pantheism controversy Jacobi wrote to Mendelssohn in some prophetic lines: "Perhaps we will live to see the day when a dispute will arise over the corpse of Spinoza like that between the archangel and Satan over the corpse of Moses."[30] Verily, verily, that day came to pass in 1867 much as it did in 1786. Each party to these disputes saw himself as an archangel, his opponent as Satan. Whatever one makes of such a dramatic metaphor, it shows the extraordinary degree to which Spinoza could continue to excite philosophical passions well into the nineteenth century.

[30] Jacobi, *Werke*, ed. F. Roth and F. Köppen, IV/1:67.

CHAPTER 14

A reply on Spinoza's behalf

Don Garrett

It is remarkable how many important philosophers of the past have come to think: "If my own philosophy were to be rejected, the only alternative would be Spinozism." As the chapters in the present collection illustrate, conclusions of roughly this form were reached in one way or another by Leibniz, Hume, Kant, Jacobi, Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling. Perhaps, then, the most general reply that might be offered on Spinoza's behalf would be this: "Such astute philosophers must have been right in judging disjunctively that either their own philosophy or Spinozism was correct. Their own philosophies are all inconsistent with one another. From these premises, you may draw your own conclusion about the truth of Spinozism."

The first premise of this short and swift argument may, of course, be disputed. Whether the argument is sound or not, however, there is both historical and philosophical value in understanding in greater detail how Spinoza would have responded to the interpretations and criticisms of the philosophers who came after him – and of none is this more so than the German Idealists, for whom his philosophy figured so centrally in so many ways and through so many modes of transmission well described in these pages. In what follows, therefore, I will endeavor to offer as faithfully as I can on his behalf some of that response, not (I am sorry to say) on every important topic raised in the rich array of contributions here, but on some of the particularly central and recurring ones: God, finite modes, the attributes of Thought and Extension, and the human mind. In doing so, I will seek to distinguish accurate from inaccurate interpretations and substantive from merely apparent disagreements, and I will sometimes call attention to additional resources within Spinoza's philosophy that may not have been fully appreciated by his successors. Based on this limited treatment of central parts of his philosophy, I will also venture along the way brief and opinionated assessments of the continuing value and significance of that philosophy in the light of subsequent appropriations, objections, and revisions. This is nevertheless just

one step in constructing a hypothetical dialogue between Spinoza and the German Idealists; for I will not try to anticipate the replies of the latter to my proposed Spinozistic response, nor Spinoza's response to those replies. The completion of the dialogue I must leave to others.

GOD

From the very beginning, no part of Spinoza's philosophy attracted more attention than his treatment of God. Even the most basic question about it has been contentious: Is he a theist or an atheist? Both Jacobi and Mendelssohn, in agreement with the bulk of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century readers, regarded Spinoza as an atheist – a characterization recently defended by Steven Nadler as well. Herder and Hegel rejected this characterization, and Novalis, in a famous phrase, calls him a "God-intoxicated man" (*Gottbetrunkener Mensch*). In addressing this most basic question, much depends, of course, on the intended interpretation of those vexed and historically shifting terms 'atheist' and 'theist.' Nevertheless, this is one of many issues of Spinoza interpretation in which it is essential to place equal weight on each side of what he regards as an illuminating identification: thus, in his striking formula "God or nature" (*Deus sive Natura*), both terms of the identity are equally appropriate, and neither notion is employed to the exclusion or reduction of the other. Spinoza's God has, in a quite literal way, many of the crucial characteristics of the God of philosophical theologians, including absolute perfection, necessary existence, infinity, eternality, omnipresence, omnipotence, and omniscience; moreover, his God is the first cause of all things and an appropriate object of intellectual love. On the other hand, theologians have grasped the nature of this being only "through a cloud" in his view, for God is not a person, has no purposes, is not benevolent, issues no commands, and exercises no particular providence; moreover, God produces no substances but only modifications of itself, and can be said to love human beings only insofar as it is the substance of which the individuals who love human beings are modes.

If the criterion for theism is, as many propose, belief in a being that is "worthy of worship," then arguably Spinoza's position does not qualify. Yet this is not through any deficiency on the part of his God, but only because worship, as contrasted with intellectual love, is too superstitious and self-abnegating an attitude to be fully rational for any being to adopt toward anything. For Spinoza, in contrast, religion is not defined in terms of worship as that is generally understood, but encompasses instead

"whatever we desire and do of which we are the cause insofar as we have the idea of God" (E4p37s1). Because he simultaneously naturalizes divinity and divinizes nature in a single infinitely expressive substance, he effectively reinterprets science itself as the highest form of religion.

A second question of pressing practical interest to German Idealists concerning Spinoza's treatment of religion was whether his ethical philosophy was congenial to the ethical teachings of Christianity. Herder's answer, at least, was affirmative, as Michael Forster observes; yet the relation is more complex. To understand the relation between Spinoza's ethical philosophy and Christianity, we must invoke his distinction between the free and those who are yet in bondage to the passions – that is, between genuine philosophers and the multitude. For the free, Spinoza rejects not only the attitude of worship, as it is ordinarily understood, but also such paradigmatic Christian virtues as repentance, humility, and pity. As species of sadness or pain (*tristitia*), these passions are all harmful to the free, who have no use or need for them either for themselves or in maintaining love and friendship with others. For the multitude, in contrast, such passions – like worship itself – may often have necessary instrumental value in motivating valuable cooperative behavior that would otherwise be impossible for them because of their limitations. In his critique of the Christian virtues of humility, mortification, and self-denial, Spinoza is a forebear of Hume and Nietzsche – as Nietzsche, and almost certainly Hume as well, appreciated. For philosophers and the multitude alike, on the other hand, Spinoza recommends the Christian policy of returning love for hatred – not because it is a divine command, but because it is the most effective means for transforming enemies into friends, through a natural psychological mechanism that he seeks to explain.

A third question about God is more theoretical, and more critically motivated: is God, as a substance, sufficiently active? This is a question raised by Herder and, partly through his influence, by Hegel (see Forster). Certainly Spinoza would be surprised at the raising of this question: power is for him the very essence of God (E1p34), and everything is caused entirely by God's power. This is not to deny that finite individual things also have and exert powers, of course, but Spinoza's monism allows him to say that these powers are simply limited shares of God's infinite power, power exerted by God through its modes. As expressed in the attribute of Extension, this power is physically dynamic; as expressed in the attribute of Thought, it is at once both logical and psychological, for the power of logic simply is the power of divine psychology.

Herder preferred to think of God as unified active force itself, rather than an active substance. But for Spinoza, this merely invites the question "in virtue of what are all exercises of active force exercises of *the same active force*?" Herder appeals specifically to *living force* to account for the characteristic activity of living things, while Spinoza holds that all individual things possess some *conatus* or endeavor for self-preservation whereby they are "animate … in different degrees" (E2p13s). In seeking to break down, rather than to explain, the absolute metaphysical distinction between living and non-living things, however, Spinoza is a mechanist, not a vitalist, in both physics and biology. Yet he is a mechanist who aims to preserve the legitimacy of teleological explanation in nature (see Beiser). He does so not by appeal to divine teleology, which he emphatically rejects in the Appendix to *Ethics*, Part 1, and not by appeal to a special kind of causal power, but by construing the reality and individuality of singular things as a function of their ability to operate as what we might call *teleological selectors* – that is, to engage in (mechanistically explicable) behavior that is conducive to the preservation of the pattern of motion and rest that, he argues, they most fundamentally or essentially are.

By locating all power and activity in a single substance, Spinoza is able to avoid thorny issues about the efficacy of causes that are otherwise difficult to resolve, such as how *powers to affect* and *susceptibility to be affected* can be matched to each other without any quasi-intentionality on the part of distinct causes and effects, and how "laws of nature" can have an ontological status that allows them to be genuinely explanatory of the interactions of the things they supposedly "govern." This is because in Spinoza's monism (as in Leibniz's monadology, with the striking exception of divine creation and conservation) there are no causal relations between distinct substances. Instead, the nature of the one substance fully determines all of the powers and the reciprocal susceptibilities of its own modal expressions, while the "laws of nature" are not external to the things in causal interaction but serve simply to explicate the character of these internal powers. In addition, Spinoza was surely right to see human beings, along with animals and plants, as existing at different points on a scale with inorganic things, rather than as parts of a "dominion within a dominion" (Preface to *Ethics*, Part 3) possessed of a metaphysically special kind of causal force. While neither seventeenth-century mechanism nor vitalism proved to be sufficient for biology, it seems fair to say that the more parsimonious mechanism offered the better (one is tempted to say, *the more live*) research program.

FINITE MODES

The active role of God as the only substance brings us to a second topic of particular interest to German Idealism: the metaphysical status of individual things as finite modes said to be produced by that substance. In this domain, the most basic question is whether finite modes genuinely have being for Spinoza. Maimon and Hegel both interpret him not as an atheist but as an *acosmist*, for whom *only* the one substance has genuine being, and so answer this question in the negative. Yitzhak Melamed, in his contribution to this volume, shows convincingly and in detail why Hegel was wrong to read Spinoza as an acosmist who simply denied the existence of finite things. Michael Della Rocca, however, argues in his important contribution that Hegelian interpreters are right *at least to an extent*: finite things for Spinoza exist only to a degree, and to an inverse degree do not, because they are only to a degree intelligible. This more moderate claim, I suggest, is itself right only – and appropriately, perhaps – to a certain extent.

In order to see why, we must distinguish, as Spinoza does, between two different ontological notions: *existence* (*existentia*) and *reality* (*realitas*). Like Descartes and many others before him, he holds unequivocally that different things have different degrees of reality, corresponding to different degrees of perfection and power. Thus, only God is real to the highest extent, but human beings have more reality and perfection than animals or plants, and human beings can increase their degree of reality as they become more virtuous and thereby acquire more *conatus* or power for self-preservation. In sharp contrast, Spinoza never writes of existence as a matter of degree.[1] Indeed, his version of the Principle of Sufficient Reason, which Della Rocca quotes – "for each thing there must be a cause either of its existence or of its non-existence" (E2p11d) – seems to presuppose both in its formulation and its specific employment that the distinction between existence and non-existence is binary, with each specifiable thing having a cause for either the one status or the other, not causes for each.

As Della Rocca rightly emphasizes, Spinoza's Principle of Sufficient Reason demands that things exist if and only if they are conceivable, or intelligible. For Spinoza, however, each thing that exists is *fully conceivable* through its causes and so fully exists. Against this, Della Rocca argues

[1] In Letter 9, for example, Spinoza writes that "the *more reality or being a being has*, the more attributes must be attributed to it," but adds about existence only that "the more attributes I attribute to a being the *more I am compelled* to attribute existence to it" (G IV/45). See also E1p8s1. I thank Yitzhak Melamed for calling my attention to the direct bearing of these two passages.

ingeniously that all relations, including the substance–mode relation, lack full intelligibility, and hence that their relata must lack full existence. Yet whatever the intrinsic (that is, non-relational!) merits of this argument may be, Spinoza would reject it. While he would certainly agree that relations between *distinct substances* would be unintelligible, the following of internal properties as consequences from an infinitely powerful essence (very much like the way in which the properties of a circle follow from its essence) is for him the very nature of intelligibility itself; relations between individual modes are rendered intelligible by their both being modes of the same substance. Whereas a thing has *existence* if and only if it is conceivable, however, *reality* varies with the extent to which a thing is *conceivable through itself*.[2] An individual or "singular" thing approximates in a finite way, for Spinoza, to the status of a genuine substance just to the *extent* to which it is "*in itself*" ("*in se*"; E3p6), which is a defining characteristic of substance. To whatever limited extent a singular thing is conceived through itself, it is also the cause of its own (continuation in) existence through its *conatus*, and to just that extent is it real.

Of course, one use of the term 'exist' is to express the range of our quantifiers; and given that there are degrees of metaphysical reality, one might choose for particular metaphysical purposes to limit the range of one's quantifiers to things that have some relatively high degree of reality. At one extreme, such a policy will license the claim that "there exists" nothing but God, the one substance. Spinoza's own policy, however, is to interpret quantifiers as ranging over whatever has at least some degree of reality – in each case, the specific degree of reality appropriate to the kind of thing it is and the power that it has. Thus, every finite thing that has any degree of reality fully exists; only purported things that have no reality at all fail – and then fail fully – to exist.

Spinoza's way of distinguishing the binary distinction between existence and non-existence from the distinction of degrees of reality seems to me a promising way of approaching contemporary debates about the ontological status of composite things – and especially non-living composite things. On Spinoza's view, any composition of things that has

[2] E1p9 states that "the more reality or being each thing has, the more attributes belong to it." However, this cannot mean that even singular things differ in degree of reality only by having more or fewer attributes. For Spinoza clearly states that singular things differ in their degrees of reality and perfection (see, for example, the Preface to *Ethics*, Part IV), even though all singular things *express all* of the infinitely many attributes, and do not have *any* attributes *belonging to* them. Since attributes *belong* only to substances (that is, as it turns out, the one substance), I take E1p9 to refer only to substances. I thank Yitzhak Melamed for raising this question.

any power to preserve itself in its own right thereby exists as a composite thing in its own right, while its degree of reality corresponds to its degree of that power – which also corresponds, as we have seen, to the extent to which it is animate.

A second and related question in which German Idealists took much interest is whether Spinoza is able to explain individuation (see Moyar and Vater). Of course, his substance monism precludes any explanation of individuation that appeals to differences of substance. Instead, however, he offers, as we have seen, a conception of singular things as finite modes of substance that are themselves to some degree substance-like or *quasi-substantial* in having their own power to exist, their own essences or natures – and even their own modes, which follow at least partly from those essences or natures. *Individuals* (*individua*) are composites of singular things that are themselves substance-like in these respects. As a body, expressed through Extension, an individual is constituted by a self-maintaining pattern of *motion-and-rest*; as a mind, expressed through Thought, it is constituted by an awareness of such a pattern. This is in many ways a promising approach to individuation. Owing in part to interest in super-substantivalism in physics and in part to arguments by Jonathan Schaffer for priority monism in metaphysics (see Della Rocca), monism in general has recently and quite properly been enjoying something of a revival. Qualitative pattern persistence, rather than irreducible substance-hood, is arguably the defining characteristic of individual things as distinguished from merely random aggregates.

A third famous question concerning the status of finite modes – raised by Jacobi, Hegel, and others – is this: can Spinoza explain the "transition" from the infinite to the finite? In approaching this question on his behalf, however, we must ask what degree of specificity is required for such an explanation. In virtue of his commitment to the Principle of Sufficient Reason, Spinoza is committed to the existence of an absolutely necessary and absolutely infinite being, and he is committed to there being an intelligible sufficient reason, in the nature of this being, for the existence of finite modes. The outline of an explanation is to be found, plausibly at least, in the thesis that a substance that is variegated into infinitely many finite quasi-substantial modes expresses more reality and perfection than one that is entirely homogeneous and undifferentiated. He is also committed by the Principle of Sufficient Reason to there being an intelligible necessary entailment from the nature or essence of this being to a complete account of what each of its finite modes is like at each stage of its history. More specifically, for Spinoza, this entailment proceeds first by

showing how a set of *infinite modes* – pervasive and permanent properties of substance – follow from the attributes (Thought, Extension, and many that are inaccessible to the human mind) that constitute the essence of the one substance. One of these infinite modes is itself the "infinite individual" composed of all other individuals; and the infinite history of this permanent and pervasive individual includes the histories of all of those variegated finite singular things that are its parts. The complete explanation of each individual part invokes the nature of the infinite modes and the natures of all those other singular things that produce or modify it; but the infinite individual as a whole follows directly from the nature of the other infinite modes and ultimately from the nature of God itself, a nature that must necessarily be expressed in a system of modes of maximal perfection and reality.

This is, in outline, a resourceful account of the derivation of the finite from the infinite. Of course, Spinoza does not claim to be able to produce the full and detailed explanation of any individual finite mode, but it is a consequence of his metaphysics that no finite human mind could possess it; the degree of power of thinking required to produce it is possessed only by God.

A final question concerning the domain of finite things, raised especially by Hegel (see Forster), is whether time is unreal for Spinoza, and, if so, whether space should also be understood, by parallel, to be a mere appearance. Before addressing it, however, it is necessary to note that this formulation of the question is doubly unfortunate from Spinoza's perspective – first in its contrast between reality and appearance, and again in its reference to space and time. For Spinoza, the proper contrast with reality is not appearance but imperfection and lack of power; appearance is, as confusion or inadequacy of perception, only an epistemological category, not an ontological one. Confusion of perception indicates lack of reality, not in the perceived but in the perceiver; and although effects generally have less reality than their more powerful causes, this does not reduce them in any ontological sense to "mere appearances." The treatment of appearance and reality as opposing poles on an ontological scale is due not to Spinoza but to Leibniz and Kant. With respect to the second pair of terms, although Jonathan Bennett has used 'space' as another term for the attribute of Extension, the concept of 'space' is merely an abstraction from the attribute of Extension for Spinoza. This is not simply a terminological point; Extension, as he conceives it, is sufficiently rich in nature not only to entail the truths of geometry but also to entail the actual existence of infinitely many finite bodies in motion and rest. In partial

parallel, the notion of "time" (*tempus*) is for Spinoza a product of the imagination, a mere attempt at measurement by standard instruments of a genuine underlying order, which he calls "duration" (*duratio*). A better formulation of the question, then, is whether what exists is truly characterized in terms of Extension and duration.

Expressed in this way, Spinoza's answer is unquestionably affirmative. The attribute of Extension is the same thing as the one extended substance, which has infinite reality. Unlike Extension, duration is not itself an attribute of God; rather, it is an order that pertains equally to all attributes. That order is, however, a genuine one, grounded in genuine causal relations, and prerequisite for the existence of *conatus*, motion and rest, and much else. Moreover, just as infinite modes of Extension are pervasive throughout the extended order, whereas finite modes of Extension have specific locations throughout it, infinite modes of each attribute are pervasive throughout the durational order of that attribute, whereas finite modes have specific locations in that durational order. God or substance may be said to be present through its modes both everywhere and everywhen, although in a deeper sense the spatial and durational orders of things are themselves "in" God, in the sense of being modes of, and conceived through, God. (God is not in duration, one might say, but duration is in God.)

Genuine as these orders are, however, perceiving them from a location within them – as opposed to understanding them as wholes, from God's eternal perspective – is necessarily an indication of limitation, finitude, and inadequacy. Nevertheless, the orders themselves are fully *genuine* as orders of things themselves, and are not merely Kantian forms of sensibility (see Boehm). This Spinozistic view of "space and time" is generally compatible with contemporary views of the universe as a space-time individual rather than a collection of distinct substances distributed through an independent Newtonian absolute space and absolute time. It is also consonant with the contemporary idea that the perception of the flowing or passage of time is a consequence of the causal relations within it.

THE ATTRIBUTES OF THOUGHT AND EXTENSION

The question of the reality of space as an order of Extension brings us directly to a third general topic: the status of the attributes, and particularly the attributes of Thought and Extension. Here there are two longstanding

questions in the German Idealist tradition of interpretation, of which the first and most basic is this: are distinctions between or among the attributes illusory for Spinoza?

Spinoza defines 'attribute' as "what the intellect perceives of substance as constituting its essence" (E1d4) and this has long suggested to many readers that attributes are perceived by the intellect without a basis in the nature of substance itself. But as many commentators have pointed out, intellect, for Spinoza, always thinks things *truly*. There is for him a fundamental parallel between how things are conceived and how things are, evident both in his definition of substance as "that which is in itself and conceived through itself" (E1d3) and in his definition of mode as "that which is in another through which it is also conceived" (E1d5). Accordingly, if the intellect perceives different attributes as each constituting the essence of substance, then different attributes *do* constitute the essence of substance.

To be sure, the distinction between attributes is not a *real distinction* in Descartes' technical sense of "a distinction between two substances." (Spinoza does state that two attributes "may be conceived to be really distinct" [E1p10s], but this is only because he is treating Descartes' proposed *criterion* of a real distinction – namely, separate conceivability – as if it were the *definition* of 'conceived to be really distinct,' so as to give the notion some application.) Spinoza's radical proposal is that there is not just one kind or domain of existence but infinitely many, of which we know precisely two – Thought and Extension – and that everything that exists exists in *each* of these ways. Thus, far from being mere properties of a substance, the attributes are rather domains or manners of existence in which each of the properties of a thing exists, so that in knowing everything about any one attribute, one knows *everything* that exists, but only one of the infinitely many *manners in which* everything exists. Indeed, properly conceived, "existence" proves to be something of a secondary and disjunctive notion, equivalent to "thinking or extended or …," for there can be no conception of existence at all except as existence through one or more attributes. Partly for this reason, attributes do not "arise from substance" in Spinoza, as Hegel suggested. Rather, they *are* substance, in each of its manners of existing. Nor need Spinoza offer any further explanation of why there are the attributes there are; each attribute is self-caused (i.e., God as self-caused in that manner) and self-explanatory. Far from being in any way illusory, therefore, each attribute – as both a dimension in which God's power is expressed and the very existence of

God itself in that dimension – is not only actual and genuine, but also infinitely real within its own domain.[3]

Despite this, it may seem that the Principle of Sufficient Reason demands that the difference between the attributes must ultimately be merely illusory, in order to satisfy a principle that Della Rocca draws as a corollary from the Principle of Sufficient Reason: "There must always be a sufficient explanation for why two things are not identical." Two things are non-identical, however, simply in virtue of being two; put more precisely, what calls for explanation is why two *compatible characteristics* are not combined in the same *substance*. Thus, for example, because Thought and Extension are compatible, and there is no explanation for their belonging to different substances, we can be confident for Spinoza that they belong to the same substance. The complement of this corollary, however is that there must always be an explanation for less-than-maximal diversity *within* a substance, inasmuch as this diversity contributes to the substance's reality or perfection. This second corollary is of equal importance for a rationalist like Spinoza, for whom the self-explanatory character of God's existence is seen in the Ontological Argument's establishment of a supremely real and perfect being, a being whose nature can be seen to entail *both* corollaries. Hence, if there were not an infinite plurality of genuine, self-caused, and self-explanatory attributes of the one substance, *this too* would violate the Principle of Sufficient Reason. Spinoza's distinctive combination of substance monism and attribute pluralism properly provides a framework in which to recognize the genuine and essential difference between the mental and the physical within a single conception of nature.

The second longstanding question about the attributes of Thought and Extension is this: is either of these two known attributes more fundamental for Spinoza than the other? One alternative, first suggested by Herder, commonly favored by Marxists, and defended in the present by Edwin Curley, is broadly *materialist*: Extension is in some way more fundamental than Thought. A second alternative, proposed as a revision of Spinoza by Herder, commonly favored by Hegelians, and defended in the present by Michael Della Rocca, is broadly *idealist*: Thought is more fundamental than Extension. It seems to me, however, that this is another case in which what Spinoza intends as a striking identification – namely, that the thinking substance (*res cogitans*) is the extended substance (*res extensa*) – is properly interpreted only by putting equal weight on both sides, without

[3] See E1d6expl for the distinction between absolute infinity and infinity within a kind.

any reduction or elimination. To do otherwise would be to violate either the reality of each attribute or their explanatory independence, on which Spinoza insists (see Beiser, who describes the significance of this independence in connection with Trendelenburg).

As Della Rocca rightly emphasizes, Spinoza is committed to the following three principles: *to be is to be intelligible*; *x exists iff x is intelligible*; and *the nature of each thing consists in the thing's availability to thought*. Spinoza intends these, however, not as reductions in one direction or the other, but as identities that are reversible with equal illumination: *to be intelligible is to be*; *x is intelligible iff x exists*; and *each thing's availability to thought consists in its having a nature*. In order to understand the force of these principles fully, however, it is necessary to understand his distinction between *formal* and *objective* being.

Although it has a long history, the distinction is most familiar to the majority of contemporary readers through its role in Descartes' arguments for the existence of God. For Spinoza, as for Descartes, there are two ways in which a thing (whether a body, or an idea, or something else) can exist: formally, outside ideas and thought about it; and objectively, in ideas or thought about it. That things can have objective being thus constitutes an explanation of intentionality: things can be *literally* – although of course not formally – present in thoughts. For Descartes, this means that the objective being of a thing is *contained in* an idea about it (if such an idea exists), and, in general, something can have either kind of being without having the other (since many things can be objects of thought without having formal being, or have formal being without being objects of thought). To the question of how ideas are capable of containing the objective reality of something other than itself, Descartes has no answer except that ideas are just the kinds of modes that can do this. Spinoza, however, makes a radical simplifying proposal: ideas do not contain the objective being of things *other than* themselves. Rather, they simply *are* the objective being of the things of which they are the ideas. For him, this identification means that everything with one kind of being also has the other. Furthermore, it is the very nature of Thought itself to constitute the objective being of things. Thus, one consequence of the (self-explanatory) fact that Thought is *one* attribute among infinitely many others is that things of every kind (including ideas themselves, which can be the objects of ideas of ideas) exist both formally and objectively. This is a doctrine that repays careful comparison with Hegel's identification of subject with object.

If an idealist interpreter proposes to reduce existence to intelligibility or to explain the former by means of the latter, therefore, he or she is in

effect proposing to reduce formal being to objective being or to explain the former by means of the latter. In fact, however, no reduction or explanatory primacy is needed; that everything has both kinds of being is just another consequence of the Principle of Sufficient Reason's requirement of maximal diversity within a substance. For this reason, principles identifying being with intelligibility must be interpreted with some care. For Spinoza, some terms ('body,' 'mind') are attribute-specific, referring to a thing or feature of a thing as it exists within a particular attribute, while others ('duration,' 'cause,' 'existence' itself) are attribute-neutral, referring to a thing or feature of a thing in a way that applies to it disjunctively, as it exists in all attributes. Similarly, and in consequence, some terms ('idea of,' 'object of') are specific with respect to the formal being–objective being distinction, while others ('being,' 'duration,' 'cause') are at least potentially neutral with respect to this distinction. 'Intelligibility,' however, is a potentially ambiguous term. It may refer specifically to thought about a thing, and hence specifically to its objective being, or it may refer in an attribute-neutral way to the feature of a thing that is expressed formally as its possibility, and objectively as its conceivability by thought. Thus, to say that "to be is to be intelligible" may express an identity in which both terms are taken as attribute-neutral, in which case it is true. If, however, it is meant to deny the plurality of ways of being that is reflected in the formal–objective distinction, then it is false, just as much as a claim that Thought and Extension are the same attribute would be false.

The explanatory reduction of *existence* to facts about a *relation to thought* is inherently implausible – indeed, it seems to me, inherently much more implausible than the Principle of Sufficient Reason is plausible. It is therefore a good thing for the defender of the Principle of Sufficient Reason that it does not demand that reduction. Spinoza's substance monism and attribute pluralism, with its accompanying formal–objective distinction, offers a promising framework both for understanding the underlying nature of intentionality and for resolving the "hard problem of consciousness." It does the latter by providing a rationale for a panpsychism that treats thought and consciousness not merely as a property belonging, incomprehensibly, to some things and not others, but rather as a parallel manner in which all things exist, albeit with different degrees of power. Indeed, Spinoza identifies consciousness with *power of thinking*, so that degrees of consciousness correspond to degrees of causal power within a relatively integrated mental network of ideas. It does the former by treating each thing's thought and consciousness as consisting essentially and in the first instance in its *awareness of itself* as existing in various manners.

THE HUMAN MIND

Explaining the presence of thought and consciousness in the universe is one thing; accounting for its specific form in the human mind is another. Concerning this final topic, German Idealists posed at least three questions. The first, raised by Fichte (see Haag) and others, is whether Spinoza can explain self-consciousness. Although he does not postulate any dialectical structure to self-consciousness, we have just seen that Spinoza offers a radical explanation of consciousness as power of thinking, and a radical explanation of intentionality by identifying the idea of a thing with its objective being. On his account, therefore, the idea of any individual thing is, in the first instance, just that thing's awareness or consciousness of itself – i.e., its mind. Thus, for example, the human mind is the idea of the human body; that is, the mind is the objective being of what is, formally, a human body. For this reason, the real question is not whether Spinoza can account for *self*-consciousness, but whether he can account for consciousness *of anything else*.

Fortunately, Spinoza does offer such an account for the case of sense perception in *Ethics*, Part 2, based on his axiom (E1a4) that effects are always conceived (whether adequately or inadequately) through their causes. Hence, to be aware of a state of one's own body is also thereby to perceive, if only inadequately and confusedly, the causes of that state in the nature of one's own body, the nature of the parts of one's own body, and the nature of external bodies that affect one's own body. This provides a kind of derivative or representational intentionality whereby one perceives external bodies *in virtue of* being immediately aware of states of one's own body. Yet because the contributions of the natures of one's own body, the parts of one's body, and external bodies to the current state of one's body are all initially confused in sense perception, it may well take considerable cognitive effort to begin to distinguish oneself more clearly as oneself from one's surroundings.

In *Ethics*, Part 5, Spinoza then extends the account from sense perception to intellection. In intellection, he holds, one is immediately aware of an infinite mode that is the *formal essence* of the body; but in virtue of this awareness, one is also aware of properties that are shared among all bodies, and one necessarily conceives the nature of the attribute that is the ultimate cause of those properties. From this understanding of the attributes, in turn, cognition of other things, proceeding from cause to effect, is achievable by those with sufficiently powerful minds; this highest form of cognition is *scientia intuitiva* (see Nassar, Förster, and Vater).

Spinoza's doctrine that awareness is in the first instance awareness of a state of one's body offers a potentially useful explanation of why the awareness of the same external reality may differ qualitatively from perceiver to perceiver, depending on the nature of the perceiver's sensory and cognitive apparatus.

A second question about self-consciousness is, as Karl Ameriks notes, in effect posed by Kant: given Spinoza's monism, do human minds not become for him merely thoughts thinking themselves, without a subject? To this question, the answer – as is so often the case with Spinoza – is a matter of degree. Although a human being is not an absolutely substantial subject in his view, the doctrine that finite individuals are quasi-substantial things with their own essences and power of thinking means that human minds are subjects in their own right, to some degree, with their own modes of thought – and the more coherent, more adequate, and wiser their thoughts are, the greater the degree. Furthermore, this is an answer to which Kant himself should be sympathetic. For he argues in the First Paralogism of the *Critique of Pure Reason* that our apparent knowledge of the underlying substantial nature of the thinking subject in a rational psychology is a metaphysical illusion, with the consequences that we cannot rule out a kind of noumenal monism in which the self is merely a mode of affection of something else. Thus, he writes, "I think … it is not determined whether I *could* exist and be thought of only as subject and not as predicate of another thing" (*Critique of Pure Reason*, B419).

For Spinoza, as for Kant, individual selfhood is a matter of having an *integrated* representation or cognition of things; and since all cognition begins in self-cognition for Spinoza, this means that a Spinozistic self must itself be an integrated thing. That this integration should be only a matter of degree rather than absolute may seem counterintuitive and even disappointing, but it is nevertheless largely supported by experience – as the only partially integrated consciousness resulting from the severing of the *corpus colossum* in so-called "split-brain" cases illustrates.

Finally, Fichte also asks whether, in denying the existence of a causally undetermined "absolute free will," Spinoza is not denying a fact directly accessible to human consciousness in deliberation and choice between possible alternatives. The question of whether the causally unnecessitated character of the human will is accessible to introspection or is merely the product of ignorance and (perhaps) wishful thinking is a divisive issue, and one that readily leads to accusations of self-deception on both sides. Certainly, as Allen Wood notes, Spinoza owes his readers an explanation

of how the mere ignorance of causes, to which he attributes the belief in absolute free will, becomes a positive belief in their absence. Although he does not develop the thought, Spinoza might suggest that the natural feature of human psychology whereby we focus attention on those beings most like ourselves and direct all or nearly all of our emotional reactions of love and hatred toward them serves in effect as a denial of other causes to which those emotions might be directed.

More directly, however, Spinoza does argue that absolute free will is neither possible nor desirable, because it renders human action ultimately unintelligible. And although he is not only a causal determinist but also a metaphysical necessitarian, he need not be at a loss to account for the modal character of deliberation and choice. For deliberation requires only a distinction between oneself and external things, together with the corresponding modality of *being possible relative to (that is, not ruled out by) the current state of external things*. This modality is readily conceivable for Spinoza, for the doctrine that all things are necessitated does not entail that they be necessitated solely by the current states of external things, independent of the actor's own internal state. In order to be a deliberator and teleological selector of actions from represented alternatives, in his view, one need not presuppose anything about how one is *realized as* a deliberator and teleological selector – and in particular, one need not represent oneself as a non-deterministic system.

The same general account of how deliberation and choice are possible for human beings also explains why, for Spinoza, God does not deliberate or choose among alternatives. Because nothing is external to God, there are no alternatives specifiable independent of God's nature; instead, God simply understands how each necessitated event follows from God's own nature. This externally unconstrained necessitation is, for Spinoza, the highest kind of freedom, and something to which, as quasi-substantial, we can only strive to approximate. His account thus offers to allow us to think of ourselves as just what science suggests we in fact are: natural entities deliberating and choosing through natural processes in a natural world.

CONCLUSION

Spinoza's philosophy influenced German Idealism in many ways, both as a groundbreaking model to be followed and as a cautionary example to be avoided. As is often the case with great philosophers, he was influential both through the ways in which he was correctly understood and through

the ways in which he was misunderstood. Despite the criticisms offered by German Idealists – including on such topics as God, finite things, the attributes of Thought and Extension, and the human mind – those Spinoza's naturalistic religion, his substance monism, his panpsychist attribute pluralism, and his accounts of consciousness, intentionality, and freedom all remain important contributions to philosophy with considerable staying power. Spinoza is the great naturalist of the seventeenth century, as Hume is of the eighteenth. It is not surprising, therefore, that in the contest with his German Idealist successors for influence on twenty-first-century philosophy, he has a strong claim to make.

According to the famous concluding line of the *Ethics*, "all things excellent are as difficult as they are rare." Few philosophers are more difficult than Spinoza and the German Idealists, and understanding the dialectic between them is at least doubly difficult. The other contributions to this volume suggest how excellent the achievement of such understanding can be – and they go a long way toward making it less rare.

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